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A Modern Comedy of Errors.

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"Why here begins his morning story right ;
These two Antipholuses, these two so like."

Comedy of Errors.

CHAPTER I.

CALM WEATHER.

IT was a calm, chill, October day. The trees, with their autumn tints of red and yellow, and russet brown and gold, were doing their best to enliven the scene ; but the hedges were so closely clipped, that they could not do much to second the efforts of the trees, though here and there a maple-bush asserted itself, in pronounced shades of red and yellow.

The harvest was all gathered in, and the yellow stacks of corn, some in process of being thatched, were the only objects of interest the stubble-fields offered to the passers-by ; except the rooks and an occasional pheasant or two, and now and then a covey of partridges.

Eastfolk is an agricultural county, the land of which is very highly farmed ; but it is flat and monotonous to travel through, which, perhaps, was the reason Mr. Paul Dursley, F.R.C.S., who was driving in a high dog-cart along one of its straight roads, paid no heed to the scenery, but concentrated his attention on the cigar he was smoking and the mare he was driving.

The mare flew along the flat road, occasionally shaking her pretty head, also occasionally shying, for she was a thoroughbred and very nervous ; but she knew her master's voice, and his '*Tiens donc, Paris! Sois tranquille, ma fille,*' always steadied her.

He always spoke French to Paris, whom he had bought of a French friend and named after the city in which he had spent some very happy years before the death of his father ; it kept up

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his French he was wont to say, but he really spoke that language excellently, and knew that he did.

He was a country doctor ; and as he entered the little town in which the Dursleys for several generations had lived, he threw away his cigar, because Dorothy, his sister and housekeeper, said it was unprofessional to smoke on his rounds ; but he was a great smoker, and could not deny himself a cigar on his homeward journey. A few minutes later, the mare turned into a stable-yard off the High Street and stopped at a door, in a high wall, which led into Mr. Dursley's garden.

There was no drive up to the house, but the garden was charming, and burst upon you as a pleasant surprise when you opened the door, for, except in the depth of winter, it was always a blaze of colour.

A diminutive boy in buttons, who rejoiced in the name of Fly, jumped out of the dog-cart and, clashing the stable-bell for the groom, went to Paris's head while his master entered the house.

"Why could not you have brought her round yourself for once?" said the groom, who was dining, to Fly.

"Why can't the sun shine o' nights for once?" retorted Fly.

"Don't know, you imp of Satan," politely replied the groom.

"Then I'll learn you. 'Cause 't ain't the sun's work ; and 't ain't mine to bring round your horses. I never asks you to take round our medicines, 'cause I know you ain't equal to it," said Fly, who had a feminine love of the last word.

While these amenities were passing in the stable-yard, Paul Dursley lunched, and his sister waited on him and listened to what he chose to tell her about his patients ; she never asked any questions, that was unprofessional, and Miss Dursley was nothing if not professional.

"Any messages?" asked the doctor.

"Only one ; but it is an eight-mile journey, and new patients ; so I don't suppose you'll go."

"Not if I know it. Who is it?"

"Sir John Dane, of Bilney Hall ; do you know who he is?"

"Yes ; an old Indian judge. He rents Bilney. Liver, of course ; what the dickens made him send for me ? He is only two miles from Eastwich, where there are as many doctors as patients."

"I, too, wondered at that. Surely, Paul, he can't be confusing you with Peter."

Dr. Peter Dursley was Paul Dursley's twin brother, a fashionable London doctor, one of the most rising men in the profession, whose speciality was the heart.

"Not unless he is in his dotage," said Paul.

"I don't know about that. You are just as clever as Peter, and might be as famous if you liked."

"Not at present, Dorothy. Peter's career is being built up on the ruins of domestic happiness ; it is the best of foundations, but not one I wish to lay."

"Ah ! Paul, that is all very grand ; but the truth is, Peter works hard and loves his profession," said Miss Dursley.

"And I am lazy. True, oh Dorothy ! By-the-way, I believe I have heard Sir John Dane has quarrelled with every doctor in Eastwich. He is a violent temper, I understand. I like violent tempers, they amuse me. I'll go and see him. I wonder if he'll quarrel with me. I'll ride over this afternoon."

It was the most momentous decision he ever made in his life ; yet it was made, as such decisions often are, in the most careless way. The thread of destiny is fine as a spider's web, the slightest puff of wind may sway it ; and strong as death, Samson himself could not break it.

"I am glad you are going, perhaps he'll be a good patient ; our income will bear increasing. Is there any medicine for me to make up ?" said Miss Dursley.

"There is the list ; there are no new prescriptions to-day."

Mr. Dursley had a surgery, and dispensed his own medicines in the old-fashioned way ; or rather, his sister did it for him, for there was no reliable chemist in Lyneham, and had he given up the custom, as he often threatened to do, all the Lyneham people and many of the surrounding villages would have had to send to Eastwich for their medicines.

He knew he could trust Dorothy implicitly ; she had done his dispensing for him for the last seven years, and he had never known her to make the slightest mistake ; and yet, for all that, she had not the least knowledge of the effects of the drugs she dispensed, but as she laboured under the impression that an overdose of tincture of orange might have fatal consequences, her ignorance only made her more careful.

Dorothy Dursley was born a century too late ; her chances of happiness were, therefore, far greater than if she had been

born before the world was ripe for her, a century too soon—for she was an intensely domestic woman, with a genius for making preserves, and distilling essences. She had also a talent for gardening, and lived a great deal in the open air, rarely sitting down till the evening, when she did needlework.

She was not given to reading, and was shrewd rather than intellectual. Paul read a great deal and talked to her about what he read, so she was not allowed to rust.

She was a tall woman, strong, healthy, fair and florid ; she had flaxen hair, a remarkably sympathetic voice, and a pretty laugh ; for the rest, she was neither plain nor handsome ; she had a good figure, but dressed badly ; she did not care in the least for appearances, so did not do herself justice.

As for her age, there was no use in her attempting to disguise it, had she been so minded, for all Lyneham knew it ; she was thirty-five, a year younger than her twin brothers.

She was an optimist, always looking on the bright side of life ; a sweet, womanly woman was Dorothy Dursley, who would have been miserable had she not had some man to whom to sacrifice herself. The fates had decreed that that man should be her brother, Paul, for whose sake she was still Dorothy Dursley.

Her twin brothers were better looking than she was, and though very different in character, they were remarkably alike in personal appearance.

Partly on this account and partly from laziness, Paul Dursley wore a clipped beard and moustache, while the great doctor was clean shaven. The brothers had been delicate children, difficult to rear, and now, though they were rather above the average height, and well-built, and well-proportioned, they were not so robust as Dorothy ; they were rather highly wrought, nervous temperaments, whereas their sister was wont to say of herself that she thanked God that she had not a nerve in her body.

The brothers were fair men of the Saxon type, with remarkably blue eyes, and a keen, intellectual expression. Paul added to this a humorous twinkle, and looked as if life, on the whole, was very agreeable to him, though, sometimes, it was rather an exertion to live it.

He had never been to Bilney Hall, where his new patient, Sir John Dane, had lived for the last seven or eight years. He found it was a large, gloomy, square house, built of grey stone,

and standing in somewhat extensive grounds; but a most depressing-looking place, dull, ugly and commonplace.

The door was opened by a black manservant in plain clothes. The entrance-hall was a decided improvement on the outside of the house; it was carpeted with tiger and leopard skins; cases of stuffed animals and birds, and of butterflies and beetles, covered the walls; antlers of various kinds of Indian deer and buffaloes' horns hung from every available point; stuffed jaguars and pumas glanced viciously at you from uncanny corners, and it was very evident that the late judge had been a great sportsman.

Indian dhurries hung as *portières* over the massive oak doors, and there was a beautiful old oak staircase with a handsome balustrade and a gallery all round the top of the hall. Paul was shown into a room containing as many trophies of sport as the hall, with the addition of book-cases, comfortable chairs and a writing-table. A fire was burning cheerfully, and in front of it sat a small, elderly man, with grey hair and moustache, and a very dark complexion, browned by Indian suns, and yellow with Indian fever; but brightened by a pair of fierce, black eyes which shone like fire. He was surrounded by three of his daughters, whose big persons seemed to fill up the by no means small room. Paul's professional eye rested at once on his patient, who he saw at a glance was seriously ill. It was not till later that he grasped the salient points of the three Misses Dane.

They were all very tall, but they were like the three degrees of comparison; Bertha, the youngest, was tall, Constance was taller, Augusta, the eldest, was the tallest; she was six feet in her shoes. They were all sandy—Augusta was the sandiest; they were all freckled—Augusta, the most freckled. They were all very neat—Augusta was the neatest; they were all prudish—Augusta, the greatest prude; they were all very busy women—Augusta, the busiest.

They were not what one would call attractive girls, but they had their virtues. Augusta was famed for her love of order, punctuality and neatness; she was the pink of perfection in all these qualities. As the clock struck the appointed hour, Augusta was always in her appointed place; whether it were the dinner-table, church, or a mothers' meeting, she was never a second late. Her speech was slow, measured and most correct. She rarely lapsed into colloquialisms; the poor people were wont

to say she spoke like a book. It would have been interesting to know to what book they referred, but they preferred to generalise.

Constance's great virtue was an exceedingly doubtful one; she was noted for an aggressive cheerfulness. Her ideal woman was a being always, everywhere, at all times, under all circumstances, cheerful; so she cultivated this virtuous vice most assiduously. There was always a smirk on her face; her attitude was ever one of self-conscious cheerfulness; her manner that of one perfectly content with herself and her surroundings, coloured with a gentle upbraiding of all those on whom the cares of life pressed more heavily than on herself.

Her cheerfulness bore the same relation to the real virtue which springs from a nature overflowing with love and happiness as sand bears to gold.

Bertha was the best of the bunch. She was really a very good-hearted girl, very amiable and with a very modest opinion of her own merits, which views her sisters encouraged.

"Mr. Dursley, I believe," said Miss Dane, with a stately bow and calmly measured tones. "We are endeavouring to persuade my father to retire. We think he would be so much more comfortable in bed."

"I don't care a brass farthing what you all think. Here I am and here I mean to stay till bed-time," growled the invalid.

"Oh, father, your room does look so bright and inviting; there is such a lovely fire up there. I am sure you would feel so happy and comfortable in bed," said Constance in her most sprightly tone.

"I prefer being unhappy and uncomfortable down here. I wish you had ten minutes of my pain, Miss Constance, and you would feel a little less happy, and cheerful, and comfortable than you do now," said Sir John sharply.

Miss Bertha did not venture to offer any suggestion, and Mr. Dursley, after a look at his patient, said:

"I think, sir, you would be better in bed, if you would allow me to help you there."

"I shan't allow anything of the kind. Turn all these women out of the room, and examine me here at once."

This hint drove the three Miss Danes precipitately to the door, which Paul opened for them, and then sat down to listen to Sir John's account of his ailments.

At the conclusion Paul decided the patient must be got to bed somehow. Persuasion failed; he tried threats.

"Well, all I can say is, sir, if you don't choose to go to bed I must throw up the case. I can't prescribe for you until I see you there."

"Very well, then, throw it up. Go and leave me to die; the sooner the better for every one concerned. Good day, Mr. Dursley; you can go the way all the Eastwich doctors have been."

Reluctantly Paul Dursley left the room. He felt interested in the case, and he had no intention of carrying out his threat, so he found his way to the drawing-room, whither his three daughters had fled.

"Is there no one who can persuade him to go to bed? Has no one any influence over him in these attacks?" he asked.

"Yes, there is Chloe, our youngest sister; she may be able to persuade him if she has returned. I will inquire," said Miss Dane.

"Chloe! Ye gods, what a name! If she is anything like her sisters there is not much hope of success," thought Paul, picturing to himself a younger, sandier, perchance even taller edition of the Misses Dane.

The next minute he heard a door open, a silvery laugh, and then a fresh young voice crying out:

"Oh! but nonsense, he must go to bed if the doctor says so. I shall take him upstairs directly."

"Not a bad voice, but she is evidently another strapping woman, who apparently proposes to carry the old man bodily upstairs," thought Dursley.

What means Miss Chloe resorted to Paul did not discover, but ten minutes later Sambo appeared with a grin on his face to say Judge Sahib was in bed, and would Mr. Dursley go upstairs and see him.

Paul went upstairs, hoping to catch a glimpse of this wonderful Chloe, who had such power over her father; but he was disappointed, the patient was alone, and in the rather long investigation which followed he forgot her existence.

CHAPTER II.

CHLOE!

AFTER all, Paul's curiosity was destined to be gratified before he left the house, for the question arose how Sir John's medicine was to be fetched, and he ordered Chloe to be sent for to settle the matter.

A minute later and there entered the room a little fairy-like creature with short curly hair, black as night, which made a dusky background for a little pale face, lit up by wonderful black eyes, like her father's, only larger and softer. She was dressed in white serge with red ribbons about it, and she advanced smiling to the bed, but what her method of progression was Paul could not decide. It was neither a walk, nor a run, nor a hop, nor a skip, nor a jump. It was nearer dancing than anything, and it was peculiar to Chloe.

"You wicked old thing, refusing to go to bed till I came! What do you want with Chloe now?" she asked, bending over the bed, patting the pillows and kissing her father.

All her actions were quick and unexpected. You never knew what she was going to do next, only, after you had known her five minutes, you were quite sure what she did would be done prettily.

"I want you to send a groom back with Mr. Dursley for my medicine. He dispenses it himself."

"Oh! does he?" said Chloe, clasping her hands and looking Paul down from top to toe.

This was their introduction.

"Quite right, too. I honour him for it. It is the old-fashioned way and the best way; I wish all doctors did. It is much safer," said Sir John.

"I am afraid, after all, I only do it in theory, not in practice. Of course I am responsible for all the medicine sent out from my surgery, but I hardly ever dispense a bottle myself," said Paul.

"Umph! Well, see that whoever does it does not poison me, or he will have to settle accounts with Chloe here; won't he, Chloe?"

"Any one who hurts one of your dear grey hairs—I wonder if my hair will be like yours when I am old, dad?—will have to answer to me," said Chloe, running her pretty little brown fingers through her father's hair, which was almost as curly as her own raven locks.

"I trust I shall never be so unfortunate as to merit Miss Chloe's displeasure," said Paul, who felt fascinated by this little pale creature, with her pretty manners, her brilliant smile, her glowing black eyes, her dusky curls clustering round her small head, and waving bewitchingly over her white forehead.

"I trust not," said Miss Chloe, with mock gravity and a roguish twinkle in her wicked eyes.

"Whom will you send, Chloe?" asked Sir John.

"James! He will be ready in ten minutes, Mr. Dursley," said Chloe, vanishing.

Paul took this as a hint he must be ready to go in ten minutes, and he never felt less inclined to go, but it made it easier for him when Chloe did not re-appear.

Then he rode home, but not, not the same Paul Dursley who had ridden out. Then he was fancy-free. Now he was bewitched, entranced, enslaved. Then he was thinking of nothing in particular, now he was thinking of only one thing, and that thing was Chloe.

He had never seen any one the least like her before. She reminded him of no person, nothing; but yet there were several things that would always remind him of her. A brilliant star-light night would recall her; so would any weird combination of duskiness and brilliancy. Some women make one think of flowers, of roses or lilies or poppies or snowdrops; Chloe made people think of twinkling stars, of flashing diamonds, of a moonlit sea, of black shadows and dazzling lights. Strange that her brilliancy always made one think of night. One always thought of two things in connection with Chloe, splendour and gloom, brilliancy and duskiness. A little witch her father called her, and a witch she was, as Paul Dursley was soon to discover.

So he rode home thinking of Chloe, thinking what a lovely soft quaint name it was, he, who five minutes before he saw her, thought it the most outlandish he had ever heard.

Of course, when he got home, Miss Dursley, though she did not ask, wanted to know all about the Danes, and Paul told her as much as he saw fit. He was an excellent mimic, and he described the scene with Sir John and his three fair daughters to perfection, but somehow he forgot to mention the fourth Miss Dane, and Dorothy Dursley went to bed under the impression that there were only three Miss Danes, and that none of them would ever make of Paul a married man.

The next day as Dursley was going upstairs to Sir John's bedroom, the strains of a violin met his ears, pouring forth a wild melancholy air which ended in a wail just as he reached the landing. Before he had time to knock at the door the violin broke out again, this time into a joyous triumphal march, as of an army returning victorious from battle. He waited till the

riotous music ceased and then he entered the room, where he found Chloe standing in the midst, violin in one hand, bow in the other, in the act of making a very low bow to her father, which bow the demon of coquetry latent in her prompted her to repeat to Paul Dursley as he made some commonplace speech. She was dressed in black, and Paul found she never wore anything but black or white and red flowers or ribbons.

"We are nothing if not musical, are we, father? That's dad's piano, he plays splendidly. Are you musical, Mr. Dursley?" said Chloe.

"I am passionately fond of music, and I know just enough to be aware how bad my own performance is, and how superior the music I have just heard is."

"What is your instrument?"

"My voice. I sing," said Paul.

"Then you must please bring some songs the next time you come; it will amuse father. He is very ill to-day, aren't you, dearest?" said Chloe, leaning anxiously over her father.

"How did you sleep, sir?"

"Chloe will tell you, she sat up with me. I hardly closed my eyes."

"Umph! Then Miss Chloe must go to bed very early to-night," said Paul.

"Who do you suppose is going to sit up with me then? Am I to be left here to die?" said Sir John sharply.

"You have three other daughters," said Paul.

Sir John grinned.

"Constance would kill me with cheerfully reading the book of Psalms; Augusta would wake me solemnly as the clock struck the hour my medicine was due; Bertha would make feeble efforts to convert me in the night watches. It would be my last night on earth if I were left to them."

"Don't, dad; you shan't be left to them," said Chloe, as if soothing a naughty child.

"Is there no servant you can trust to sit up to-night?" asked Paul.

"Not one that I should not kick out of the room before the morning," said Sir John.

"Then I shall ride over to Eastwich for a night-nurse; she will go on duty at ten to-night and come off at nine to-morrow morning," said Paul.

Sir John blustered and protested, but Paul was firm; there must be a nurse, Miss Chloe was much too young to bear broken rest with impunity.

"I had better tell you at once, Sir John, your illness is likely to be a long one, and your recovery depends in a great measure upon yourself. Your heart is weak, and if you excite yourself the consequences may be serious."

"Chloe must be with me in the day-time, then, if I consent to a night nurse," said the patient.

"Yes, but she must go out for two hours every day; it is not good for so young a girl to be in a sick-room all day."

"I am twenty," said Chloe, straightening herself up to her full height.

"Run away, my witch, and let Dursley prescribe for me."

"I am going, but mind this, Mr. Dursley, if you try to separate dad and me, I shall simply *hate* you. We are just all the world to each other, no one else exists for either of us; and if he does not like a nurse I shall sit up with him, no matter what you may say," said Chloe.

"I shall say nothing, I shall simply be obliged to throw up the case," said Paul.

"You odious, odious creature," cried Chloe in a fury, rushing from the room, with her violin, while her father lay chuckling in his bed.

"She is a little devil when roused, but it is over directly; she inherits it from me, I suppose," said Sir John. "She was born and brought up, until she was seven, in India, when I retired; the others were all born and bred in England, perhaps that is the reason they are all like their mother, while Chloe is like me in everything."

"With a difference," thought Paul, wondering if he should see Chloe again that day.

At any rate he was to hear her again, for she took to working off her anger on her violin in the room below, and he could hear her moods passing from anger to tears, and then to smiles, till, when he reached the hall, she had broken into a valse, and through the half-open door he could see her dancing as she played.

"Am I forgiven?" asked Mr. Dursley, pausing on the threshold.

Before Chloe could answer, Miss Dane entered the room from another door, and in her precise, measured tones observed:

"Really, Chloe, your conduct is most incongruous; father lying seriously ill upstairs, and you dancing in this wild way in the room below. It is most unseemly."

"Don't talk about what you don't understand, Augusta," said Chloe haughtily; and then, with a sudden burst of amiability, she turned to Mr. Dursley, and lifting her black eyes to his blue ones said:

"It is I who want forgiving, not you, isn't it?"

"Chloe is positively unmaidenly, I quite blush to hear her," thought Augusta.

"You want taking care of, you don't seem to have any idea of taking care of yourself," said Paul, and turning to Miss Dane, he informed her he was going to send a nurse, as her father's illness was likely to be a long one.

"Ah! well, we must look on the bright side, there are only seven days in each week, and only twenty-four hours in each day; I dare say the time will pass quicker than we imagine," said Constance cheerfully.

"For you perhaps it may, but I should hardly think it will pass so pleasantly for father, suffering as he does," said Chloe, a demon of mockery lurking in those wicked black eyes.

"I think the nurse a very wise step; night-nursing would interfere a great deal with our various avocations, unfit us for our daily duties, and disorganise the whole establishment. Chloe is the only one who has no duties, and Mr. Dursley considers her too young to sit up at night," said Augusta.

"I have one duty at any rate, and that is to look after my father, and that I am going to do to the best of my power," said Chloe.

"Augusta was speaking of our parochial duties, Chloe dear; the schools, and the parish, and the poor prisoners, whose sad hours it is our gladdest privilege to be allowed to enliven," said Constance.

"With psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, sandwiched in between tracts and sermons. Poor prisoners! If ever I am a prisoner, I hope you won't visit me," said Chloe, who was in one of her wicked moods.

"I hope, if ever I am in prison, you'll be charitable enough to visit me, Miss Chloe; your violin would be a charming distraction," said Paul.

"So I will, I promise. What fun it would be. Can't you do something dreadfully wicked and get sent there?" said Chloe.

"Chloe! You must be demented," exclaimed Augusta.

"She'll be wiser when she's a little older, won't you, Chloe dear?" said Miss Constance cheerfully.

"Chloe does not mean half she says, Mr. Dursley," said Bertha stolidly, putting down a basket of tracts, on which she had been regaling the inmates of Eastwich gaol that afternoon.

"Chloe means to give Mr. Dursley some tea before he leaves," said Chloe, running to the tea-table, which was just then brought in.

"Now sit down all of you, and I'll wait on you. It is one of Chloe's pleasures, she has not any duties, as Augusta says. Mr. Dursley, if it will make life happier to you, you may hand my sisters the bread-and-butter," said Chloe, as she dispensed the tea, darting about the room like a flash of light, first to one and then to the other.

"Very well, then, Miss Chloe, we will consider it a bargain, if ever I am in prison you are to come and see me. Meanwhile, I should like you to see me in my own home first, so if you will allow me, I will bring my sister, who lives with me, to call on you to-morrow. She would be charmed to know you, and I don't think I ever met any one who did not like Dorothy."

"Oh! I should like her to come very much. Bertha and I will ride over one day and return the visit," said Chloe.

Bertha, Paul subsequently discovered, was Chloe's favourite sister, and more amenable to her wishes than the others. Miss Augusta and Miss Constance did not accept Paul's proposal with cordiality; they did not care to visit, except with the county and the endowed clergy of the neighbourhood.

"What day are you most likely to be at home, yourself?" asked Chloe of Paul.

"Chloe!" exclaimed Miss Augusta in a tone of horror.

"Thursday; it is my vaccination day. I am always at home to tea on Thursdays," said Paul, looking delighted.

"Then we will avoid Thursday. I am sure Miss Dursley would rather have us all to herself; that was why I asked the question, Augusta," said Chloe, making a very low court courtesy to her eldest sister as she drawled out her name, and then picked herself up and rushed upstairs to her father.

Was it why she asked the question ?

Paul did not believe it was ; neither did he believe she would rather go to his house when he was out ; to say she would was only a sop thrown to Augusta and her propriety, with the double purpose of teasing him.

CHAPTER III.

INTRODUCES THE GREAT DOCTOR.

"Fortune in this mortal race,
Builds on thwackings for its base."—*G. Meredith.*

HE lived in Brook Street. He moved there about seven years before this story opens, at which time he raised his fees from one guinea to two guineas, thereby drawing the line which placed him in the first rank of consulting physicians. For the next five years he prospered fairly well ; but though by no means the most successful they were the happiest years of his life ; perhaps the happiness retarded the success.

Great happiness, however, is not usually of long duration, and at the end of the five years there came a crash, and Peter Dursley said good-bye to great happiness for a long while. He also said good-bye to the wife he idolized, the love of his life, who died somewhat suddenly, leaving him with four young children. At first he seemed stunned, and lost all interest in his work and in everything else ; then he thought he would go for a voyage round the world, and was making arrangements to do this, when he was called in to one of the Royal Family. From that time he roused himself, he gave up his proposed trip, and threw himself heart and soul into his profession.

He could never be happy again, he thought ; he might be famous, he might be successful, in assuaging the sufferings of others he might at least forget his own. He also took a keen interest in politics, for he found distraction necessary for a man who passed as many death sentences in a month as a judge does in four or five years.

His practice increased enormously after his visit to Windsor, and he was now a fashionable doctor, one of the first authorities on all diseases of the heart. "Physician, heal thyself," says the proverb ; but the great Doctor Dursley, clever as he was, could never entirely cure himself ; his heart was broken, and he had to

live with the pieces ; he was not the first man that has done the same.

He was absurdly like his brother Paul in appearance, with these exceptions, he was clean shaven, and he seldom smiled. His manner, too, was very different from Paul's ; he was very grave, very quiet ; reserved, yet sympathetic ; gentle, yet most decided ; but without any of the vivacity and cordiality that characterised his brother.

He was a good speaker, and the only time that he was roused to any enthusiasm was when speaking at a public meeting ; he was occasionally heard to laugh when with his children, with whom he rarely missed spending half-an-hour, at least, every evening before his dinner. The eldest child, a little girl of eight, he saw more of, as she was allowed to slip into his room whenever he was alone, and was gradually, though unconsciously, filling up a part of the blank her mother's death had left.

The three younger children were boys, and were rarely seen out of the nursery ; when they were old enough they would go to school ; but Nona would never leave her father, whom she already worshipped ; and it was touching to see the way in which she watched for opportunities to snatch five minutes of his society.

She never disturbed him, merely to be in his presence was enough for Nona ; she would sit at his feet with a book or a doll, and make herself scarce at the least sign of a patient or visitor. In this she was abetted by Drummond, the butler, who always gave her time to escape before a patient was announced.

Drummond had a better memory for faces than his master, and was an invaluable servant. He knew at a glance if a patient were a new one, or had been there before, and he exercised a wise discretion in the order in which he showed in patients and other doctors. Silent and apparently as unconscious of his master's affairs as all good servants appear to be, he was really most observant, and had his own views on subjects of which, had he thought about it, Doctor Dursley would have believed him to be profoundly ignorant.

There was one patient of the great doctor's to whom Drummond had a strong aversion ; this was a lady, a widow, not, in Drummond's opinion, so young as she looked, but on the sunny side of thirty, even in his estimation ; she was also pretty, but how much beauty she owed to art, and how much to nature, was

another point on which the great doctor's butler had his views. She was fair with a profusion of bright golden hair, and dark eyes and eyebrows, but neither the hair nor the eyebrows were, in Drummond's opinion, as God made them.

She dressed well and she had a good figure ; she usually arrived in a hansom and dismissed it before entering, from which Drummond argued she was none too well off ; though it was a mystery to him how she could afford so many doctor's fees, when even he could see there was precious little the matter with her, and what there was wrong, he was very sure his master would never cure ; which opinion he confided to Mrs. Drummond on his Sunday out.

Mrs. Halkett, that was the name of Drummond's *bête noire*, had first consulted Dr. Dursley about a year after Mrs. Dursley's death, but she had known him slightly in his wife's life-time. Her visits, at first rare, increased in frequency as time went on, though there was no visible cause for anxiety on the score of her health.

One morning about three weeks after Paul Dursley was first sent for by Sir John Dane, Mrs. Halkett arrived in Brook Street and was shown into the dining-room to amuse herself, as best she might, with papers and periodicals, till her turn came to go in to Dr. Dursley. It arrived at last, but before showing her in to the consulting room Drummond chose to carry some letters to his master. Dr. Dursley glanced at them, threw some aside, and telling Drummond to wait till he rang before announcing the next patient selected two to read at once.

The first was from his brother Paul, giving an account of Sir John Dane's case, and asking what Peter's fee would be if he called him in for a consultation. Sir John wished for him, but was not a rich man, still as Peter would be glad to see his brother and sister, Paul hoped he would name a reasonable sum.

The great doctor considered and named fifty guineas, scrawled a few lines to Paul to that effect, and opened the next letter, which was the offer of a baronetcy from Windsor, to be bestowed at the coming marriage of one of his Royal patients.

Dr. Dursley rose and paced the room two or three times, then he sat down and covered his face with his hands, and thought of the wife who would have rejoiced so at the honour conferred on him ; what was it to him now she was dead ?

A husk, an empty shell, a barren title ; still for all that when

he rose to ring the bell he had decided to accept it. A baronetcy is not to be despised though you have no wife to share it with you; but the image of his lost love was floating in his brain, when Mrs. Halkett at last made her appearance.

Perhaps that was why Dr. Dursley was rather more reserved, rather less sympathetic in his manner, rather briefer and more decided in his advice, rather less observant and rather more pre-occupied than usual, on this occasion.

Because he was all these things, it behoved Mrs. Halkett to be rather more plaintive, a little more suffering, more confidential, more determined to achieve her object than heretofore.

"You must be out more in the fresh air, Mrs. Halkett; take more exercise, and don't indulge these feelings of depression," said Dr. Dursley, handing her a prescription.

"I try not to do so; but alas, Dr. Dursley, you know as well as I do how hard this loneliness is to bear; and I was so young too, and I have no children to soothe my lot, nor have I any engrossing occupation to take me out of myself, as you have."

"Try and live for others," said Dr. Dursley.

"I would, had I any one to live for," and the dark eyes were raised appealingly to his, and surely, surely he felt a slight pressure, when the little tightly gloved hand with his fee inside it, rested in his.

He rang the bell promptly, and when the door had closed on Dora Halkett, he whistled a scarcely audible, long, low whistle and muttered to himself, as he stood before the fire with his coat tails under his arm, "That's her game, is it? I never suspected it before. I must be on my guard. Faugh! The woman is daft. And to-morrow is the day I dread. Two years to-morrow since——, two years."

"They are all gone now, father," said a little voice, and a tiny hand was slipped into his, as Nona, who had been on the watch, came in.

Dr. Dursley sat down, took Nona on his knee and told her he had had a letter from the Queen, and she was going to make him a baronet, and he would be called Sir Peter Dursley, and when he was dead, little Paul would be called Sir Paul Dursley.

"And what shall I be called?" said Nona.

"The same as you are now, father's darling."

"Oh! well, it is prettier than 'Sir' after all, but it does not

seem fair, 'cause I am older than Paul," said Nona, whose views on the law of primogeniture were somewhat crude.

"Yes, but Paul will not be Sir Paul till I die, you know. Have you ordered the wreaths? That is right, then to-morrow you shall drive with me to mother's grave, and help me to put them on it."

But when the next day arrived, with it came a telegram from Paul Dursley, "Received letter. All right. Patient worse. Come to-day."

And Dr. Dursley had to go down to Eastfolk by the mid-day train, and leave Nona to go with her grandmother, who lived near him, to his wife's grave, on this the second anniversary of her death.

CHAPTER IV.

BREEZES.

CHLOE was not at home when Miss Dursley, at Paul's request, called on Miss Dane, so she left the house, still under the impression that there were only three Miss Danes, and wondering greatly why on earth Paul wanted her to know three such uninteresting women; he was not usually so anxious for her to be on visiting terms with his patients.

"Well, what do you think of them, Dorothy?" said Paul as they drove home.

"Great plain women; stiff as pokers; pious as tracts; yellow and depressing as London fogs; why in the world did you bring me so far to gain so little as their acquaintance, Paul?"

"Well, the honest truth is, Dorothy, I have fallen head over ears in love with one of the Misses Dane."

"Paul! How can you talk such nonsense?"

"It is the solemn truth, Dorothy; it was love at first sight, and my whole happiness depends on whether she accepts or refuses me," said Paul, very gravely.

Dorothy's answer was to burst into a fit of laughter, between the peals of which she gasped out:

"I beg your pardon, Paul, but—but, which is it?"

"I shan't tell you anything more. I consider your conduct most unsympathetic and unbecoming," said Paul, pretending to be offended.

"I can't help it Paul, I really can't; you of all men; you, so fastidious about women; you, to have lived to thirty-six without seeing a girl you would condescend to look at; you, to fall in love with one of those great strapping, sandy—"

"That will do, Dorothy," interrupted Paul; "if you can't be civil hold your tongue. Of course, I knew you would never approve of my wife, if she were an angel from heaven."

"I beg your pardon; nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see you happily married. I could then go where duty calls me—to take care of Peter and his children. Well, certainly love is a mystery, one I shall never fathom. You can swear at me if you like, but laugh I must."

And laugh Miss Dursley did, whenever she thought of Augusta, Constance and Bertha Dane, for the next few days; but laugh as loud as Paul when by himself, or with only Fly and Paris to hear him, she did not; and then came a day when the laugh was all on Paul's side.

With that day came Bertha and Chloe to return Miss Dursley's visit. They rode over, and Dorothy's amazement when Bertha introduced Chloe as her youngest sister was as great as her anger with Paul for playing her such a trick, and with herself for having been so taken in.

She could scarcely keep her countenance as she glanced from the great, stolid Bertha, who looked plainer than ever in her riding habit, to the little fairy-like Chloe, with her star-like eyes, her silvery laugh and pretty manners; only anger prevented her from bursting into a fit of laughter as she thought of her stupidity and Paul's silly joke.

The girls had not been five minutes in the drawing-room before Paul, who must have ridden like a jockey to have done it, returned from a long round, and appeared as surprised to see Chloe as she did to see him, though as a matter of fact she had contrived to tell him the previous day of her intended visit.

"I did not know there were four Miss Danes," said Miss Dursley to Chloe. "Paul never mentioned you," she added with a severe look at her brother.

"I suppose he did not think me of sufficient consequence; you see, there is so much less of me than of the others to mention. All the same, I think it was very rude of you to ignore me like that, Mr. Dursley."

"I did not mean to be rude," said Paul, in a low voice, as he glanced at the little trim figure set off to perfection in the tight-fitting riding habit.

"There is another thing you have done that you ought not to have done: why did you tell me you were never at home except on Thursdays? You have no business to be at home to-day," said Miss Chloe.

"I knew you were coming, so I came home."

"And very wrong it was of you. I came to see Miss Dursley, not you; you ought to have gone to see father."

"I am going. I shall ride back with you and Miss Bertha if you'll let me."

"I am not sure that I shall. I shall ask your sister. I want to have a nice quiet talk with her while you take Bertha all round your stables and garden. I want to know all about your horses."

"Then I had better take you instead of Miss Bertha."

"You won't do anything of the kind. I have come to see Miss Dursley, and I am going to spend my afternoon with her. Bertha wants to go to the almshouses too, so you had better start at once," said Chloe, and Paul was obliged to obey. But he ran Bertha round the garden and stables in double-quick time, and discovered that the almshouses could not be visited so late in the day.

When he came back he found Dorothy had fallen a victim to Chloe's charms, and was packing her up a basket of lavender water, elder flower water, rose water, pot-pourri, and various preserves for him to take over the next day.

He was allowed to ride back with them simply and solely on Sir John's account, as Miss Chloe endeavoured to impress upon him; but Paul did not believe that was the only reason, though he pretended he did.

"What do you think of my taste now, Dorothy?" he asked, on his return.

"I think she is charming; but don't you wish you may get her, Paul? She is a desperate little flirt; but whether it is a malignant or a benign form of flirtation, I have not yet seen enough of her to discover. I don't think she is a young woman to be had for the asking, though; still, 'nothing venture, nothing have.' I wish you success with all my heart. It is a relief, too, to find

you still sane, which I doubted when you told me you were in love with one of those sisters of her's."

"I did not ; I said I was in love with a Miss Dane, Chloe is a Miss Dane whom I hope to make Mrs. Dursley one day. I am sorry to say Sir John is not so well to-day ; he is always worse if Chloe goes out ; the cheerful Constance irritated him to-day. If he does not get better soon I shall propose calling in Peter ; I should like to pull him through."

"For Chloe's sake, I suppose ?"

"For his own, also ; he is a nice old fellow in spite of his irritability, which is partly disease, and he is an excellent companion, full of anecdote, and has led a life of adventure ; no wonder he finds Eastfolk dull," said Paul.

Sir John was laid up for another fortnight, making no improvement, during which period Paul and Chloe grew more intimate, and, to amuse the patient, held concerts in his room, till one day matters reached a sort of climax, and Paul determined to send for further advice. He and Chloe had a little tiff over a song one day, and to punish Paul, when he arrived the next day in his professional capacity, he found she had gone to Eastwich to lunch, and had not yet come back.

In her absence Sir John had declined to eat any luncheon, and when Paul appeared, Augusta, Constance and Bertha were all standing round their father's sofa trying to induce him to eat some cold pheasant. It was then three o'clock, and Sir John had just been roused to tell them he would see them all in a condition they would decidedly have preferred to avoid, before he ate in the middle of the afternoon, when Paul arrived.

"Sir John is retrogressing sadly, I fear, Mr. Dursley," said Augusta.

"I thought him a trifle better yesterday. I think Sir John had better have further advice, it would be more satisfactory for us all," said Paul.

"What do you say to that, father ? I think it is a famous plan ; it will cheer you up and give you a fresh start ; by all means let us have some London physician, they do such wonderful things now-a-days, I dare say they might almost cure you," said Miss Constance hopefully.

"Much you know about it !" growled Sir John.

"I don't know, of course, I can only hope," said Constance.

"And pray," said Bertha, in an undertone.

"Whom would you suggest, Mr. Dursley?" said Augusta.

"I shall have Dursley's brother, if I have any one at all; what would his fee be, do you suppose, Dursley?"

"I'll write and ask him; he would come here for less than his usual fee, because he would see my sister and me."

"Oh! that is capital. I do think you are a fortunate man, father," said Miss Constance.

"An enlarged liver and a weak heart may constitute your idea of fortunate, Constance, but it does not strike me as the right word to apply to a man in my condition, blessed with three daughters who drive him mad when Chloe is out."

Constance smiled brightly at Paul, and tossed her chin up as much as to say, "we must not mind, he can't help it," and then she took up the plate with some pheasant on it and, going to Sir John's side, said:

"Well, now the question of a second opinion is so satisfactorily settled, do try and eat a little piece of this nice pheasant, father."

"D—n the pheasant," exclaimed Sir John, with such emphasis on the verb that Paul could scarcely keep his countenance.

Bertha left the room promptly, Constance coloured and remarked that as it seemed to irritate rather than please her father, perhaps it had better be sent away.

"Old Mrs. Jones will be so pleased to have it, it will be quite a boon to her," she remarked.

"Then for heaven's sake let old Mrs. Jones have the boon and the pheasant; go and take it to her, and tell her what a fortunate woman she is to have the wing of a pheasant to comfort her when dying of cancer," said Sir John grimly.

Paul disliked Miss Dane more than he did Constance, and thought if only she would follow her sisters, he might amuse the old man till Chloe came home; so he pulled out his stethoscope, at the sight of which Augusta fled as though it were a loaded revolver.

Sir John chuckled when the door closed on her, and recovering his temper, he asked Paul to go and sing to him as he had had no music all that day.

Paul insisted on his patient taking some light refreshment first, and then went to the piano and, accompanying himself as best he could, sang song after song; till at last he took up one with a

violin obbligato, over which he and Chloe had quarrelled the previous day. He muddled over the introduction, and then when he began to sing, lo and behold the violin began to play, and looking round he saw Chloe, who had been in the room unknown to him for the last half hour, standing laughing as she played.

"How long have you been here?" said Paul, when the song was finished.

"Ever since you began to sing."

"You little witch; why the plague couldn't you have accompanied him?" said Sir John.

"I was enjoying his efforts; but, dad, why are you going to have another doctor? Are you worse?" said Chloe, anxiously, kneeling down by her father's sofa, and laying her cheek on his.

"I am always worse when you are away."

"I wish I had not gone. It is all Mr. Dursley's fault; he should not quarrel with me as he did yesterday. I hope your brother is nicer than you are, else he had better not come down here."

"I believe he is, and he is certainly much cleverer, which is more to the point," said Paul.

"I don't know. You have managed father better than any doctor he has ever had. I don't think he is worse; the others worry him when I am out. I won't leave you again, dad, till you are well; I will only go out for an hour at a time. I'll never leave you for longer again, except at night with nurse."

And Chloe kept her promise.

That night Paul wrote to Dr. Dursley and, as we know, telegraphed a day or two after for him to come down to Bilney Hall.

(To be continued.)

Two New Women of the Last Century.

TWO women of the eighteenth century stand out conspicuously as types of the new sisterhood that we hear so much of nowadays. They were born too soon. If they had lived in the present age, they would have been hailed with enthusiasm instead of amazement and disgust. They would have been shining lights at the Pioneer Club, their utterances would have been carefully noted, and their eccentricities would have been admired and imitated. One of these women is Mary Wollstonecraft, the other Lady Caroline Lamb.

Mary Wollstonecraft was the Sarah Grand of her day, but a Sarah Grand without any followers of her own sex—a voice crying in the wilderness that met with no response. She stood alone in her outcry for the rights of women; she was the only one who dared to preach the now-general doctrine that a woman has a life of her own to live independently of men; she was the first to ignore the outer ceremony of marriage as compared with the spiritual union of hearts. For her doctrines, which were hooted at as outrageous, she suffered severely. Imlay, the man she loved with the whole strength of her nature, could not rise to the high level of her expectations: forsaken, insulted, scoffed at, driven to such desperation as to attempt suicide at Putney Bridge, she endured social ostracism, till Godwin released her to enjoy one brief year of rest and peace. She left behind her a reputation by no means enviable amongst the orthodox of her sex, such as Mrs. Inchbald. They shook their heads and turned up their eyes at the very mention of her name.

Lady Caroline Lamb was a creature of another order—a being of fire and air. Without the clear intellect or the reasoning powers of Mary Wollstonecraft, she had a brilliance, a fascination, an individuality which gave her the charm of a heather bell fresh with dew. The opinion of fashionable London was nothing to her; her daring, her freedom from conventionality in an age of conventionality, marked her out as new and strange. Had she lived at the end of the nineteenth century, instead of the eighteenth, she would have been one of the leaders of her sex. The "wine of her passion," as our critics put it, would have amply atoned for her extravagant adoration of Byron, and her wearing

the dress of a page would have been considered thoroughly up to date. Does not Angelica assume boy's clothes in that much admired portion of the "*Heavenly Twins*,"—the Tenor and the Boy?

And as to Lady Caroline making copy out of her own private griefs and grievances, what is that but an instance of journalistic instinct cropping up before due time? Like her own Calantha, Lady Caroline never had any secrets; she wished to have none. Calantha left her private letters about, so that any one could read them; Lady Caroline seems to do the same: she is eager to tell her story to any one who will listen to it. Frank and fascinating, she was always true to herself; there was not a false note in her. In "*Glenarvon*," she has practically given us her autobiography. As a novel it is worthless—as a self-revelation, it is invaluable.

The miniature exhibited by Mr. Murray in the Gallery of Fair Women, represents Lady Caroline's outward woman in the brown velvet doublet and lace collar of a page. It is the dress she wore during her intimacy with Byron. We see here the curly crop of pale golden hair, the large expressive hazel eyes, the small, slight, graceful, child-like figure. It is left to our imagination to conjure up the musical intonation of voice and the brilliant sallies of this creature of caprice and impulse and whim. "Her talk, her manners and her character," so Bulwer-Lytton tells us, "shifted their colours as rapidly as those of a chameleon."

In spite of everything, she was the first, the only one, to her husband. He was always passionately fond of her. He told Lady Holland, one of the few he ever spoke to on the subject, "that his wife was the most exquisite charm and the keenest trial of his life." For a brief period she was certainly the "soul's idol" of Byron, and later on, she kindled the boyish adoration of Bulwer-Lytton.

So much has been said about her eccentricities that it is something of a surprise to find, from Mr. McCullagh Torrens' "*Life of Lord Melbourne*," what a few of them were. She was returning a visit at Danesbury, and having no one to keep her company, she chose to sit outside with the coachman instead of taking her usual place inside the carriage. On arriving at the door of the mansion, the footman waited to hand her down, when, to his horror, she said, "I am going to jump off, and you must catch me;" and before he could say a word, the deed was done. She paid her visit decorously, but of course there was

much talk in the servants' hall. A great lady might do this with impunity now, it would only be looked upon as an ebullition of high spirits.

At another time, Lady Caroline happened to come into the room just before a great dinner party, when the servants were laying the table. She found fault with the decorations, they were too level and too low; there ought to be something picturesque or elevated, a group of figures or a tier of flowers. The butler listened, but went on spreading out the contents of his plate chest. Lady Caroline, however, would not have her ideas set at naught. She ordered the centre-piece away, and without disturbing the arrangements of the table, she lightly stepped into the vacant place, and stood in a graceful attitude, to illustrate her meaning. The butler flew for his master, who, when he came in, cried in his gentlest tone, "Caroline, Caroline!" and taking her in his arms, carried her out into the sunshine, talking all the time of ordinary matters, so as to draw off her attention. That evening she received her friends with her usual grace of manner. But might not this incident be explained as the craving after æsthetic beauty of form, not then recognized in table decorations? The butler could imagine nothing finer than the silver centre-piece; Lady Caroline had a soul above centre-pieces; she demanded something graceful, poetic, individual. When she tried to make others see as she saw, they looked upon her as a raving lunatic. Her Celtic blood accounts for some of her characteristics; her quick perceptions, her warm heart, her love of beauty, together with the varying changes of her excitable temperament.

Lady Caroline Ponsonby was the only daughter of Lord and Lady Bessborough, and was born on the 3rd of November, 1785, thus being three years older than Byron, whose birth was on January 22nd, 1788. In consequence of the illness of her mother, who was a daughter of Earl Spencer, Lady Caroline was sent to Italy under the care of a servant, and remained there from the age of four till nine. She was then brought to Devonshire House, to be brought up with her two cousins, called in "Glenarvon," Lady Sophia and Lady Frances (Lady Morpeth and Lady Middleton). What these early days were, Lady Caroline tells in her own words. "Children neglected by their mothers, served on silver in the mornings, carrying down their

plates to the kitchen, no one to attend on them, thought all people were dukes or beggars, did not know if bread or butter was made, wondered if horses were fed on beef, &c."

Until fifteen, the passionate, whimsical little girl learned nothing; her instinct was for music, she delighted in it, and cried when it was pathetic, but she was not allowed to follow it up. She could neither write nor spell, yet she made verses which her family thought beautiful. She preferred "washing a dog or polishing a piece of Derbyshire spar, or breaking a horse, to any accomplishment in the world. Drawing-rooms, looking-glasses, finery or dress company were her abhorrence."

She sometimes went on visits to her grandmother, Lady Spencer. Here, the housekeeper in hoop and ruffles ruled over seventy servants, and always attended her ladies in the drawing-room. The stiff rules and regulations of these great houses often galled Lady Caroline's free and independent spirit. In "Glenarvon" she speaks with delight of standing on the summit of a cliff in Ireland, hour after hour, to behold the immense ocean, watching the waves as they swelled to the height of mountains, then dashed with impetuous force against the rocks below.

She was about nineteen when her future husband, the Hon. William Lamb, came upon the scene. She tells Lady Morgan that she thought him beautiful, and far the cleverest person then about, and the most daring in his opinions and in his love of liberty and independence. "He offered to marry me and I refused because of my temper, which was too violent; he asked me again and was not refused the second time, because I adored him." The second time, too, he was an eligible *parti*, for by the death of his elder brother he was next heir to his father, Viscount Melbourne. Lady Caroline, who was a shrewd reader of men, gives us in "Glenarvon" an estimate of her husband's character. "He had a warm, ardent and generous nature, a distinguished and prepossessing manner, entirely free from affectation. It is seldom," she adds, "that this can be said of any man, and more seldom of one possessed of such singular beauty of person. He appeared, indeed, wholly to forget himself, was ever more eager in the interests of others than of his own. He was so sincere that even in conversation he never misstated or exaggerated a fact. When he loved—and he never really loved but once—it was with so violent, so blind

a passion that he might be said to dote upon the very errors of the girl to whom he was attached." It is impossible not to recognize this sketch of Lord Avondale as a portrait of Lord Melbourne. It has, too, a singular resemblance to the pen and ink sketch, given by Leslie, the painter, of the same man, at a later period of his life. Leslie says that "Lord Melbourne's head was a truly noble one; he was the finest specimen of manly beauty in the meridian of life I ever saw; not only were his features eminently handsome, but his expression was in the highest degree intellectual. His laugh was frequent and the most joyous possible, and his voice so deep and musical that to hear him say the most ordinary things was a pleasure; his frankness, his freedom from affectation and his peculiar humour made everything he said quite original." Such was the man who lavished his affection on fitful, child-like Lady Caroline. She enjoyed love-making, but she rebelled at the idea of marriage; she even offered to follow her future husband as his clerk. We catch some glimpses of their love scenes in "Glenarvon."

"It is but the name of wife I hate," replies the spoiled and wayward Calantha; "I must command, . . . my will, . . ."

"*Your* will shall be my *law*," answers Lord Avondale.

After the wedding, when her husband came to take her away, she said, "*I will not go*." It was with shrieks of despair that she was torn from her father's arms. At the time of the marriage, which took place on the 3rd June, 1805, Lady Caroline was not twenty years old. The honeymoon seems to have been chequered with a good many tantrums on the part of the bride. At one time she would talk and laugh, at another, she would stamp her foot and threaten to return to her father. When she said, "You must not contradict me in anything," her husband gave in and let her have her own way. He opened her eyes to many things about which she had hitherto been ignorant. At first she shrank with pain and horror from this new world; by degrees, especially when she heard the freedom of talk that went on at Bocket Hall, she became accustomed to it. Her cousins had been contented embroidering muslins or painting on velvet; she hated her needle, and eagerly drank in all that she heard passing around her. Of her three children, two died in infancy, and only one, a son of weak intellect, lived to grow up and to survive her. When she

was thrown into the fashionable world of London it seemed to her like a dream of enchantment—all was fresh, beautiful and new. She became a social success. People stared at her, wondered at her odd sayings and abrupt ways, but made all haste to secure her for their balls and dinners. As the wife of a promising Whig minister—the coming man—she was the centre of an admiring crowd. She had two questionable friends, Lady Oxford and Lady Cahir—called in “Glenarvon,” Lady Mandeville and Lady A. Selwyn. Lady Oxford read Greek, and though she had no husband, she had lovers whom she despised—“bearers of shawls, writers of sonnets and callers of carriages.” In such company it was natural that Lady Caroline should flirt, and flirt she did. She was a favoured guest at Holland House, and describes Lady Holland as the Princess of Madagascar with a pen dipped in gall.

“At the end of a long gallery, two thick wax tapers rendering darkness visible, the princess was seated. A poet of an emaciated and sallow complexion (Rogers) stood beside her. He at all times said precisely that which was most unpleasant to the person he appeared to praise. This ‘yellow hyena’ had, however, a heart noble, magnanimous and generous.” It was the “yellow hyena” who first told Lady Caroline of the rising star. He said, “You should know the new poet,” and offered her the MS. of “Childe Harold” to read. She read it and that was enough. The first actual meeting took place one night at Lady Westmoreland’s when Byron was the lion of the season. “Lady Westmoreland led me up to him. I looked earnestly at him and turned on my heel. My opinion in my journal is mad, bad, and dangerous to know.” So says Lady Caroline in a letter to Lady Morgan, but what the real spiritual effect of this meeting was on her mind we learn best from her account in “Glenarvon.” There we see the overwhelming fascination, the keen sense of alarm, the desire to escape, and the inability to do so. “She beheld a youth, for he had not the form or the look of manhood” (Byron was then twenty-three), “leaning against the trunk of a tree. It was one of those faces which having once beheld, we never afterwards forget. It seemed as if the soul of passion had been stamped and painted in every feature. The eye beamed into life, as it threw up its dark ardent gaze with a look nearly of inspiration, while the proud curl of the upper lip expressed haughtiness and bitter contempt, yet an air of melancholy and

dejection shaded and softened every harsher expression. Such a countenance spoke to the heart, and filled it with one vague and powerful interest so strong, so indefinable, that it could not easily be overcome."

At the second meeting the same impression becomes intensified.

"Calantha's eyes had long been fixed on one, who took no part in the scene, whose pale cheek and brow expressed disappointed hope or joyless indifference. Was it indeed Lord Glenarvon she beheld? Yes; it was himself. Face to face, she stood before him and gazed with eager curiosity upon him. Never did the hand of a sculptor produce a face and form more finely wrought, so full of soul, so ever-varying in its expression. Oh! was it in woman's nature to hear him and not cherish every word he uttered? And having heard him, was it in the human heart ever again to forget those accents, which awakened every interest and quieted every apprehension? It was Glenarvon she beheld, and her soul trembled within her and felt its danger."

Though she was pierced to the heart, she did not like the wily turn of Glenarvon's eye, the contemptuous sneer of his curling lip, the soft, passionless tones of his voice

All the same, her infatuation grew stronger. The charmer knew how to play upon her like a skilful musician; in the evening, he was ardent, the next morning cold, *distract* and pre-occupied. He often said he could never feel interest or love for anything on earth. "There is no danger in my friendship," he said; "I am cold as the grave, as death; and all here," pressing his hand to his heart, "is chilled, lost, absorbed."

All this is so consistent with Byron's character that there can be no doubt that Lady Caroline was painting accurately from life, and that these chapters give a genuine transcript of the romance, that was at once the torture and the joy of her life. The thought that she could amuse or soothe the gloomy poet made her blest; he allowed himself that she was the only woman who never bored him, and as their intimacy progressed, he told her, "Few have so many faults, yet how is it that you have wound yourself already round this cold, this selfish heart?" During his long walks with her, he described the far more beautiful and magnificent scenery of the countries he had travelled in, countries teeming with rich fruit, vineyards and olive groves, mountains soaring to the skies. He told her he hated these cold northern climes and the bottle-

green of the Atlantic. And then he spoke of love, and she listened and trembled. "Remember me in your prayers, my gentlest friend," he whispered. "Even in the still night let some remembrance of me occur. Think of me, for I am jealous, even of thy dreams." There is one passage in Lady Caroline's novel, when she looks at her husband asleep, which would do credit to some of the modern fiction; it is full of irresistible conviction—it is the genuine outburst of a heart that feels impelled to evil and is yet conscious of the good it forsakes. Byron said that Lady Caroline's husband was as superior to him as Hyperion to a satyr. He evidently had him in his mind when he described Lord Henry Amundville, in "Don Juan:"

"He was a cold, good, honourable man,
Proud of his birth, and proud of everything,
A goodly spirit for a state divan.
A figure fit to walk before a king,
Tall, stately, formed to lead the courtly van
On birthdays, glorious with a star and string.

• • •
And being of the Council called the Privy,
Lord Henry walked into his Cabinet,
To furnish matter for a future Livy,
To tell how he reduced the nation's debt."

Absorbed in political questions, there is every reason to suppose that Lady Caroline's husband left her pretty much to herself. She tells us in "Glenarvon" that he remarked one evening at dinner that she looked ill, and took her hand. She would rather he had struck her to the heart. At one time she took a pen and wrote a full confession of her guilty feelings, the next she tore this doubtful testimony of an erring heart, and appealed to Heaven for mercy. But the struggle was vain. From her childhood she had never refused herself one wish, one prayer, and now she did not know how to curb the fierce, the maddening fever that raged within her. She shrieked when her children came near her. Here are her own words: "I am lost," she cried; "I love, I worship. To live without Glenarvon will be death. One look, one smile from him is dearer than aught else that Heaven can bestow." The diamond bracelets on her arms were his gift, the chain and locket which contained his dark hair had been given by him, the clasp that fastened the band round her waist was composed of richest jewels brought by him, and

"the heart that was thus girt and circled by his gifts beat for him alone."

If we are to accept Lady Caroline's account in "Glenarvon," she meets her lover disguised as a page; he repeats his vows, he gives her a ring to be a marriage bond between them, and swears that his life, his love, is hers.

She calls herself "miserable, and fallen." It is impossible to look upon her as an innocent woman; over and over again she calls herself guilty. Her letters are full of reproaches; she says, "I have wandered from right, and been punished," and writing to Lady Morgan of Byron, she calls him "that dear, that angel, that misguided and misguiding Byron, though he left that dreadful legacy on to me—my memory."

We hear a great deal of Lady Caroline's pursuit of Byron, but it is certain that for some time she occupied first place with him. She was the Lady Adeline Amundville of "Don Juan," and in the letter which he allowed to be genuine (preserved verbatim in Lady Morgan's memoirs), he wrote to her as "his dearest Caroline." "If all I have said and done, and am still but too ready to say and do, have not sufficiently proved what my real feelings are, and must ever be towards you, my love, I have no proof to offer. No other shall ever hold the place in my affections, which is, and shall be, most sacred to you." . . . "Promise not to love you—ah! Caroline, that is beyond promising. I was and am, yours freely and entirely, to obey, honour, and fly with you when, where, and how yourself might and may determine."

But the hour of infatuation passed. Lady Caroline remained the same, but Byron found it easy to forget the heroine of the hour—to slight, ridicule, and even hate her. He did so with Jane Clermont, and he did so with this distracted and excitable spoiled child till he almost drove her to frenzy. He went to stay at a country house; she wrote to him every day, passionate, remorseful, beseeching letters; she heard that they were handed round to be commented on, that her presents were given to others, and at length, a letter was brought to her. It is given in "Glenarvon," and is a *fac simile* of Byron's real letter, which is as follows:

"LADY CAROLINE,—I am no longer your lover, and since you oblige me to confess it by this truly unfeminine persecution, learn that I am attached to another, whose name, of course, it would be

dishonourable to mention. I shall ever remember with gratitude the many instances I have received of the predilection you have shown in my favour. I shall ever continue your friend, if your ladyship will permit me so to style myself, and as a first proof of my regard, I offer you this advice: correct your vanity, which is ridiculous; exert your absurd caprices on others, and leave me in peace.—Your most obedient servant, BYRON."

The blow struck home. It was as deep as the subtlest enemy could desire. To have romance and sentiment met with ridicule and contempt, what woman could bear it?

"It is all very well," wrote Lady Caroline to William Godwin many years afterwards, "if one died at the end of a tragic scene after playing a desperate part; but if one lives, and instead of growing wiser, one remains the victim of every folly and passion, what then?" Calantha, the heroine of the novel—betrayed and forsaken by her lover—dies in her husband's arms, at a village inn. Lady Caroline did not die after her "tragic scene" with Byron, she lived to write "*Glenarvon*," to pour out the history of her infatuation to those who would listen to it. "Woe be to those who have ever loved *Glenarvon*!" "O, better had it been to die than to see and hear *Glenarvon*. When he smiled, it was like the radiance of Heaven; when he spoke, his voice was more soothing than music!" So the lovelorn and forsaken woman bewailed her faithless lover. His comment was that the "portrait was not good; he did not sit long enough."

We are told by Lady Caroline that she wrote her novel in one month, in the middle of the night, unknown to any one but Miss Welsh, a governess. It was necessary to have it copied (it certainly must have been, for a more wretched scrawl than Lady Caroline's it is impossible to conceive), so she sent for Mr. Woodhead, a famous copier, to come to Lady Caroline Lamb at Melbourne House. He came and found Miss Welsh, beautifully dressed, seated at the harp, and Lady Caroline, in page's clothes, looking like a boy of fourteen, at a writing table. He addressed Miss Welsh as Lady Caroline; she showed him the real author, but he could not believe that a school-boy could have written such a book. The next time he came, he found Lady Caroline in her own clothes; she told him that William Osmond, the young author, was dead.

"Glenarvon" was published anonymously in 1816. Lady Caroline sent a copy to her husband, and she says—though it is hard to believe the statement—that he was delighted with it, and they became united just as the world thought they were separated for ever. On the day fixed for signing the deed of separation, Lady Caroline was found seated beside her husband, feeding him with tiny scraps of bread and butter. The lawyers were sent away and the reconciliation was complete.

It was many years afterwards that Bulwer-Lytton's romantic sentiment for Lady Caroline set in. He was a young man of twenty-two; she was ten years older, but looked much younger than her age. "He loved, was intoxicated and was happy." He was a constant visitor at Bocket Hall; he drank in Lady Caroline's honeyed flatteries and sweet words, he was alone with her at all hours, she allowed him to wear Byron's ring—a signal mark of favour—and sent for him when she thought she was dying. "If ever tenderness seemed real, hers was." But a new favourite appeared, and as Bulwer-Lytton grew jealous, Lady Caroline grew cold. He says, except for her large hazel eyes, curly golden hair and beautiful teeth, she might have been called plain, but she had to a surpassing extent the attribute of charm, and never failed to please when she chose to do so.

Sometimes, at Bocket Hall, a page was sent round at three in the morning, to summon the visitors to hear Lady Caroline play on the organ. She often stopped playing, and talked so brilliantly, that her hearers listened and never thought of bed. Yet how pathetic is one of her letters to William Godwin! She says, "I am like the wreck of a little boat, for I never come up to the sublime or beautiful, merely a little, gay, merry, boat, which perhaps stranded itself at Vauxhall or London Bridge, or wounded without killing itself as a butterfly does in a tallow candle. I was happy, rich, well, joyful, and surrounded by friends. I have now one kind faithful friend in William Lamb, two others in my father and brother, but health and spirits and all else are gone. How? Oh! assuredly not by the visitation of God, but slowly and gradually by my own fault."

She complained of the purposelessness of her life. "I have nothing to do—I mean necessarily," she writes to Godwin. "There is no particular reason why I should exist; it conduces to no one's happiness, and, on the contrary, I stand in the way

of many. I seem to have lived 500 years." Hemmed in by conventionalities, her free and independent nature could find no fitting outlets. There was nothing for it but to hug the remembrance of her old romance to her heart, and weep over it. At one time, she made a bonfire of copies of Byron's letters to her, and had a circle of young girls dressed in white to dance round it, singing some verses of her own composition.

As she was driving out, she unexpectedly saw Byron's funeral procession passing along, and the shock was so great that she never recovered it. The separation between herself and her husband took place the following year (1825). On the twentieth anniversary of her wedding day—the day she left Brocket Hall for ever—she wrote some pathetic verses as she sat under her favourite tree.

"Little birds, in yonder grove,
Making nests and making love,
Come, sing upon your fav'rite tree
Once more your sweetest songs to me.
An exile from these scenes I go,
Whither, I neither care nor know :
Perhaps to some far distant shore,
Never again to see thee more.

• • • • •
This is my twentieth marriage year
They celebrate with Hassard's beer ;
They dance, they sing, they bless the day,
I weep the while and well I may,
Husband nor child to meet me come,
Without a friend, without a home,
I sit beneath my fav'rite tree.
Sing, then, my little birds, to me
In music, love and liberty !"

Lady Caroline had lived too much to live long. She went abroad with her brother, and again returned to England ; but only to die. She died at Melbourne House, January 26th, 1828. Her husband, faithful to her, even to the last, came from Ireland to see her die. Much loved and much loving, generous, undisciplined, capricious and kind-hearted ; under better conditions, her life might have expanded into fairer proportions. As it was, she was treated like a petted child, instead of a reasonable woman. She was an eighteenth century "Nora Helmer." What wonder if there was a revolt ?

C. J. HAMILTON.

Too Dearly Bought.

"BRAVA! Brava! Oh, admirably well done! I knew you had it in you." There was what seemed a faint ring of exultation in the speaker's low clear voice, as he pushed aside the curtains that divided the little drawing-room into two, and confronted the startled occupant of the inner portion of the room. The girl, for she was no more, was in an unconventional position enough—lying prone on the floor a huddled heap of draperies and writhen limbs, with one arm flung out in terribly suggestive rigidity. At the sound of the voice, she sat upright. Crimson confusion flooded her face, and swept away the white convulsed look which had been stamped there a moment before.

"How could you!—how—how long have you been here?" she stammered.

"Let me help you to rise," said her visitor gravely. "Mrs. Mostyn, I know, always requires a little assistance after the curtain has fallen."

"Don't!" flashed out the girl, springing to her feet. "Was this fair? Was this kind?" Her voice was hoarse and thick, her eyes dilated. She put her hand to her throat, palpitating with the quick, hard-drawn breaths, as if she were trying to choke down the excitement which almost overmastered her.

"No, it was not fair," said the man with due contrition. "I have been very inconsiderate, but I heard your voice; I heard you were going through the last scene, so I would not let Mrs. Manners announce me. And yet, if you will forgive me for my thoughtlessness, I can hardly regret it. I have come to see you about a very important matter, and if I were superstitious, I should think it was a good omen to find you as I did. I have always prophesied success for you, have I not? Well, I think it is coming now, and sooner than I could have dreamed." He paused for a moment and looked into her wide startled eyes with a grave protecting kindness. "Have you been out to-day? No, just as I thought. Let us go into the garden, then. But I must speak to Mrs. Manners, though. She must look after you better."

"Oh, never mind about that," said the girl impatiently, pushing back her disordered hair. "Yes, if you go into the garden I shall join you in a moment or two." And she hurriedly left the room.

"Pity she takes it so dreadfully in earnest. However, that will do no harm at first, and it will soon wear off," said the man to himself, as he sauntered round the room, glancing at a book here and there.

The room was of the ordinary "genteel lodgings" stamp and in no way differed from hundreds of others, save for the number of books lying about and the profusion of flowers—not hothouse flowers, but honest, hardy, open-air spring flowers, bringing into the little London room a whiff of clean, fresh country air, and suggestions of the fields, of new life, of rising sap, of moist glistening furrows, and of green, growing things. The long window opened on to a little flight of steps leading down to the garden, a terribly draughty arrangement in winter and bleak early spring, but pleasant enough to-day, and by-and-by the visitor strolled out. The garden was little more than a long strip of grass with a clump or two lilac bushes, but it boasted a well-grown lime in the centre, now shaking out its broad green leaves in their first silken freshness against the soft spring sky. A wicker chair or two stood about under the drooping branches. Here the visitor sat down, a smile half-amused, half-kindly curving for a moment his thin and singularly mobile lips. The play of the mouth and the firm set of chin and jaw were in no way concealed, as he wore neither moustache nor beard. Those who did not know him would probably have pronounced him to be an acute and successful barrister, while no two people would likely have agreed as to his probable age—a subject of frequent conjecture indeed; some holding that he was younger, others that he was older than he looked. Everything about him was of interest to a large section both of society and the wider world, for people "who were anybody" would have recognized him at once as Mr. Frank Dighton, the popular and successful actor-manager, who had come so rapidly to the front. Those who knew him would also have wondered exceedingly how this busy and much sought after man came to be sitting in that suburban garden this forenoon, and evidently the same idea occurred to Miss Nugent, as in a few minutes she came down the steps and crossed the grass.

"Now," she said, with a smile and a quick little flush, "I am quite rational again, and prepared to hear what weighty matter brought you out here to the ends of the earth this morning. I think it must have been the unexpected honour that so over-

whelmed me—but really, it was very good of you,” she added earnestly.

Miss Nugent was by no means unknown either—no member of Mr. Dighton's company could be—but of late she had been attracting a good deal of attention from her acting in the much talked of “society” drama now running at the Original Theatre. She was tall even in this age of tall women, but carried her slender height, as one could see even in the few steps across the grass, with a certain graceful stateliness that would have made her noticeable anywhere. As to her face, opinions were as divided about it as about Mr. Dighton's years, and they ran through the whole gamut of description from “beautiful” to “positively plain,” and for each there was a certain justification. The pale, rather irregular face owed all the beauty that some saw in it to the charm of her smile and ever varying expression; above all, to the wonderful hazel eyes that seemed to change with every mood and feeling, now clear and bright as the amber waters of a Highland burn flowing over its pebbles in the autumn sun, now darkening in the shadow of a cloud or of overhanging rocks. At this moment they were glowing golden with pleasure and expectancy. Mr. Dighton was, perhaps, not wholly unaware how his presence could quicken the light in those wistful eyes.

“There is so little time at night, and I think the matter important. I don't know what you may think about it,” with a smile. “I wish you to take Mrs. Mostyn's place next week.”

The girl uttered a faint cry and sat staring at him.

“Mrs. Mostyn is bothering me again, wanting to break her engagement—higher terms, and all the rest of it. This time I mean to give her a little surprise. I shall take her at her word, and next week I hope to introduce a new Mrs. Blake, who will do the part even more justice than her predecessor. Oh, yes, I am sure you will,” answering what he imagined was in the girl's mind. “I have been watching you for some time, and I am not afraid, and now, after what I have seen to-day, I feel sure of you. Don't imagine that friendship has anything to do with the matter. A manager can't afford to be friendly beyond a certain point. I hope I have shown you that I have not forgotten old days, but this is far too important an affair for sentiment—that might procure a place as a super, but hardly as leading lady.”

Well, she was taking it rather oddly. To step from under-

study into the place of her principal, and that permanently, might well take away the girl's breath ; but it was success, fortune, applause, he was placing within her reach, a position in her profession and in the world for which she could hardly have dared to hope for years to come. Surely she might show a little more appreciation.

Miss Nugent seemed to wake to the necessity too. She looked up from the long hands lying folded on her knee, which she had been studying as if she could read her future in their lines.

"It is too much," she said in a breathless sort of way. "Oh, I know what it means, what it would bring, if I but do my part"—she threw out her expressive hands, and her eyes kindled to a glow at the vision of sudden success—"and I know, too, how much I owe already to you—and now this!—this!" and she turned to the man with a look that expressed more than her halting words could say. "Of course, I am letter perfect in the part now, and after what you heard this morning, you won't, perhaps, think me conceited," with a delightful shy smile, "if I say I would, in some ways, give a slightly different rendering from Mrs. Mostyn ; but," and the pale trouble clouded her face again, "I—I hardly know how to say it to you, but I hate the part."

"You hate the part!" in blank amazement. "Why, it is *the* part of the play, and the most powerful one on the stage just now."

"I know, I know, that is it. It is too powerful for me ; it gets too great a hold on me. It has a fascination for me that is growing horrible. I hate it, I shudder at it, and yet I cannot keep from going over and over it, as you saw this morning. I seem to lose my very self in it. For hours, days together, I have no identity of my own. I am Isabel Nugent no longer, but Hester Blake in every fibre. I think as she would, speak as she would, feel, wish, hope, hate as if I were really she. And now if I throw my whole heart into it, as I must and will—be Hester Blake sleeping and waking"—she broke off with a timid glance into his. "I know," she said very humbly and hastily, "that this probably seems mere folly to you, and worse—thankless folly. But you have always allowed me to speak freely to you." Her voice trembled away.

"This is mere morbid nonsense, if you will allow *me* to speak freely, Miss Nugent. You are living far too much alone. Devotion to work is all very well, but you may carry it too far.

You may be thankful, meantime, for your imaginative power. Wait for a year or two, and you may find it more difficult to get out of yourself and into your part. I think at this time of day we need hardly go into the old question of morality in art and so on," rather impatiently; "although if there was any need for it, I think I could make out a pretty good case even for Hester Blake. If she is not an example, you can regard her as a warning if necessary. I at least have not much fear that my old friend Isabel will be contaminated by poor Hester. But seriously, for I have not time for abstract questions, you do not really mean that you will let a scruple or a fancy of this kind, or whatever you please to call it, stand in the way of your success, of *our* success, and"—after a second's pause—"my wishes."

"You do wish it—really?" raising wistful eyes to his.

"Certainly I do. Don't I wish your success and mine, and, above all, the Original's? Besides, there is always the pleasure of seeing your predictions verified. I have always told you you would get on, and now I expect you to do me credit. You are just a little too young for the part, but that cannot be helped."

"I haven't the courage to refuse; I almost wish I had, or, rather, that you hadn't asked me, and there had been no need to decide," with rather a tremulous smile; "and yet, success—success! Ah, you don't know how you tempt me when you hold out a bait like that."

The man smiled slightly, but, doubtless, in the girl's intoxicating dreams there was an element that had never entered into his ambitions. Success to her would mean the conquest of one as well as of the many, and even that to-day seemed not impossible.

"The part attracts me only too much; although I loathe it, I am always longing while I am playing up to Mrs. Mostyn to show the people how Hester would really act. I only wish it did not seem to come so naturally to me."

"Of course you are," ignoring the latter part of her speech. "That notion of yours is only a kind of stage fright; like it, it will soon wear off. Now," with a slight hardening of voice and face, "we must get to business," and then he plunged into the discussion of the necessary arrangements.

After he was gone, the girl threw herself back in her chair and, with her hands clasped behind her head, gave herself up for once to the full luxury of dreaming. The last half-hour seemed

to mark a new era in her life. She had promised to act Hester Blake; she had agreed to leave this quiet, out-of-the-way nook, to go more out into the world. It would be a great change in her life. Was it possible that it might herald a still greater? The sunlight filtered through the tender green overhead; the shadow of the dancing leaves flickered over her upturned face and her eyes, at this quiet moment like two deep peaceful pools in whose depths the light slumbered. At this moment she was neither haunted by Hester Blake, nor picturing herself as the successful actress, the acknowledged artiste. She was merely a girl dreaming over again the old dream.

Whether or not it was the effect of one mind upon another, but Mr. Dighton, too, on his way back to town was thinking a good deal of Isabel Nugent. People often speculated on the connection between these two, and smiled significantly at the slightly fatherly touch which would sometimes appear in the manager's manner towards the young actress. The truth was simple enough. Twenty years ago nearly, Frank Dighton, destined then for the Bar, had gone to read for a long vacation at a lonely sea-coast parsonage. His "coach" had every talent but that of making use of those he possessed, and with all his scholarship and attainments, was as helplessly stranded and forgotten in that out-of-the-way place, as the last winter's wreck on the shore, that with every tide was settling deeper and deeper into the sand. Late in life he had loved and married, but here, too, fate pursued him. His wife had died, leaving him with the old-fashioned, precocious, wistful-eyed child, between whom and the pupil a great friendship presently sprung up. Next summer it was renewed; then Frank left Oxford for London; the current of his life changed, and in his early struggles and successes the memory of that quiet house on the lonely shore and the quaint little child, who had been so pathetically fond of him, grew dim and faded away. Years after it was suddenly revived when a tall slight girl appeared to seek a position in his company. Her haunting eyes awoke some vague recollections, and by-and-by she proved to be his child-love of long ago. Her father was dead; relative or friend she had none. She had already gone through a hard apprenticeship in a provincial company. Would he help her? Of course, he tried to dissuade her; advised her to try any other way of getting a living, but ended by giving her a

very small part in which she could at least do no harm. He was soon forced to admit her talent, and from that day her progress was rapid, and had secretly astonished him. Not for the dearest and closest friendship, far less for the vague sentiment of an old memory, would Frank Dighton have committed any part—not even the smallest—into incompetent hands; but it becomes both pleasant and profitable to befriend a *protégée* who shows such unmistakable signs of “coming to the front.” He prophesied confidently now of her future, and he was not the only one who predicted a bright career, a foremost place for her. He was fully satisfied with his morning’s work. He would lose a clever actress whose name was already assured, but he would be freed from a grasping, contentious woman. Isabel Nugent was in a sense his creation; she would reflect infinite credit on his penetration and his training; she would shed fresh lustre on the Original and its actor-manager. Would it be wise to draw the bonds closer? Would friendship and gratitude be sufficient to secure her services? It was not the first time the thought had crossed his mind. There was much in favour of a closer union. Mr. Dighton was well accustomed now to see beautiful eyes soften and fair faces flush at his approach, but somehow his thoughts turned with increasing pleasure to those hazel eyes that would glow golden at a kinder smile, a warmer word from him. He allowed those thoughts a few minutes’ indulgence, and then summarily dismissed them. His new arrangements were of more importance just now. The success of this new venture secured, there would be time to think of other things. The fruit hung well within reach. He might pluck it at his leisure.

* * * * *

“I hope Dighton knows what he is doing. It’s a great risk letting Mrs. Mostyn go.”

“You may pay too dear for anything or anybody. Dighton’s a cool chap. He won’t risk much.”

“H’m! even the coolest may lose his head sometimes. This girl has done very well in smaller parts; but to put her in Mrs. Mostyn’s place—of course, there may be other reasons,” with a laugh.

“Don’t think so. He’s not that sort. It’s himself and the Original first, and all else an uncommon long way after. No, he’d not risk the success of a piece to please any *chère amie*.”

“Miss Nugent will have some new frocks, at any rate. I am

sick of Mrs. Mostyn's red one and her black one ; besides, she is getting too stout for the style she affects. I wonder who makes these women's clothes. One wouldn't copy them, of course, but still one nearly always gets ideas. Really, if it were not for that I couldn't sit out those dismal plays."

"They say she means to give quite a new reading of the part, anyhow."

"Oh, then," in a tone of satisfaction, "she is sure to have new frocks."

These were a few of the comments, male and female, with which the stalls at the Original buzzed, before the curtain rose on the night of Miss Nugent's first appearance. Behind the scenes there was even more speculation and questioning, somewhat tempered among the ladies by the fact that each had been advanced a step by the departure of Mrs. Mostyn, though each, doubtless, privately held the opinion that she could have taken the place of *dame première* quite as well as "that Miss Nugent." Mrs. Mostyn had been no favourite ; she had been too haughty and overbearing ; Isabel, on the other hand, was too reserved, too dreamy and self-absorbed.

"Except when she's on the stage, she seems only half alive. I don't think she's quite aware of our existence. There's not a bit of the 'pal' about her," said Miss Chudleigh, the lively damsel who had been promoted to Miss Nugent's former part. "Dighton's fly enough as a rule, but I hope he knows what he's about this time. She made no great show at rehearsal."

It was true. Isabel's appearance had been rather a disappointment. Dighton refused to question the wisdom of what he had done. The excitement of the occasion, of an audience, would string her up, he said to himself. To-night, under all his calmness, he was devoured with anxiety. "Of the World, Worldly," was a one-part play, and that, in this case at least, not the actor-manager's. With Hester Blake, the play must stand or fall, and if Isabel Nugent failed him, not all the finished perfection of his acting or of the *ensemble* could save it. Worse still, he would be convicted of a gross error of judgment. But as he waited in his evening dress, for his part required no making up, to take his place in the first scene, no one could have imagined that there was anything unusual under that calm confident exterior. No, he could not believe that he was mistaken. At that moment

Miss Nugent came out of her dressing-room. Her dress was of almost barbaric splendour. As she advanced towards him, her tawny velvet, sable trimmed, trailing behind, her head high, her eyes glowing brighter than the topazes that incrustated the bodice of her gown and crowned her dark hair, misgiving vanished. His heart gave a strange leap.

"You are going to do honour to us all," he whispered exultantly.

"*To you*," she murmured.

There was no time for more—the curtain rose.

There is no need to describe the plot of "*Of the World, Worldly*," in detail. Plays of its class have been as numerous as they have been popular of late. Its heroine, of course, was the woman with a past, and its story was the Nemesis of the past. It was sumptuously staged, and no detail was omitted to render a complete picture of the society it represented—a society reckless, profligate, luxurious, madly extravagant, frantic in its scramble for pleasure as in its pursuit of any and every distraction. A society in which a Hester Blake can take a leading place, living an easy, splendid life, whose shame is hardly a secret, on the folly and dishonour of men, robbing a woman of lover or husband, a man of fortune and honour with cynical, practised ease.

From the rising of the curtain, Isabel's success was assured. Her dress and appearance impressed the women. "Too tall and thin, perhaps, but what a gown! and what an air! Mrs. Mostyn always looked vulgar and overdressed in the opening scenes."

Her consummate address struck the men. Dighton himself was surprised. He had expected power in the tragic close, but he was not prepared for her inimitable rendering of the cool daring, the graceful feline wiles, the adroit flatteries of a heartless, soulless woman of the world, in all the subtle charm of her baleful beauty.

"Is this Isabel Nugent?" he asked himself more than once in the course of the first act.

Then comes the late awakening. Hester is caught in the snare she has so often laid. Instead of conquering she is herself enslaved. The old life has grown loathsome. She makes a desperate struggle to cast it off, to win trust and esteem as well as love. For a time she almost succeeds; the man whom she fears almost as much as she loves him, believes in her, but the moral taint is too deep, the battle is too sore for her. She reveals herself as she is; the past, like the murdered corpse,

which old superstition believed that the earth could not cover, refuses longer to be hid. She learns at last the meaning of shame, and in her despair between the old life and the new, both now impossible to her, she cuts the knot in the only way left.

The great audience was hushed, every breath held, as that awful last scene was played out before them. The poor lost creature, unable longer to bear the burden of existence, and yet terrified to die—scourged out of life by her own actions into the black abyss from which heart and flesh shrink,—hesitating long, and snatching a desperate courage at last.

There was a long moment of dead silence when the one despairing shriek of vain repentance, of blank horror and utter recoil, had rung out, and the curtain fell. Then the pent-up feelings of the audience broke out in a roar of applause, such applause as had never before shaken the walls of the Original, since Mr. Dighton's very successful management began, nor ever before, probably.

The curtain was raised again on that lonely splendid figure lying prone on the empty lighted stage, and then, in response to the clamour, Mr. Dighton led forward the heroine of the evening. He was wholly himself again, the debonair, successful actor-manager, no longer Maurice Sundon, the wronged, cruelly-disillusioned husband, touched to mercy and forgiveness only when too late. As he led Miss Nugent to the front he was smiling a gay, gratified smile in response to the rapturous plaudits.

The woman beside him bowed again and again—that gracious, all-embracing stage bow—mechanically she curved her white lips to a smile, but she looked straight before her with awful unseeing eyes, in whose dark depths the horror still lingered.

"Jove! that woman's eyes make one creep; too real, don't ye know," was one man's comment, repeated in many different ways, and then people said, "It had been quite too delightfully horrible," and yawned and went away.

Isabel Nugent had made her mark. Next day every paper had its laudatory notice of her performance, and of the manner in which she had created anew a part already so well rendered by such a powerful actress. Where the critic was a friend or admirer of Mrs. Mostyn the praise was not so lavish, but it could not wholly be withheld. Isabel had other proofs besides those in the newspapers of her success. Invitations began to come

in from all quarters, though it was still early in spring, and the young, little-known actress, who had made a name for herself with such dramatic suddenness, bade fair to be one of the sensations of the coming season. She had already established herself in pleasant rooms in a more accessible quarter, and at Dighton's urgent advice began to go out more. As the season advanced he began to repent the counsel he had given. Isabel seemed bitten with a perfect fever for society, and from being rather a recluse was now to be seen everywhere. After her exhausting part at the theatre, she would go on to two or three houses, and the whole day was filled with lunches, at homes, garden parties, the thousand distractions of London in June. Dighton hoped she might tire of it, but, though the dark circles deepened round her eyes and she seemed to become thinner day by day, she carried on her double life with the same feverish energy.

Dighton, of course, was much in request, and often encountered Miss Nugent after the theatre, or went on with her to the same house. One July night, or morning rather, he was making his way through the still crowded rooms of a great house. The air was hot and heavy, and though he encountered acquaintances in scores, he felt too flat to talk.

"I must cut this sort of thing for the rest of the season, if I'm to hold on to the Original," he was saying to himself, as he turned into the lighted conservatory at the end of the suite. Here he might get a little coolness, and apparently quietness also, for it was deserted for the moment, save for a girl sitting alone at the further end. He stood for a moment, enjoying with a sense of relief the soft light, the tinkling fall of the fountain, the cool greenness, for the hostess had chosen to have only ferns and moss here, a contrast from the flowers that were massed in the rooms. Then he glanced at his companion. She was sitting opposite a mirror that multiplied the lights, the quivering maidenhair, the tossing water-drops; but she was evidently not admiring the pretty vista, but intently studying her own face. With a slight sense of amusement he moved a little nearer, and then paused more startled than he liked to own. It was Isabel Nugent who sat among the silk cushions, but the face looking out of the mirror was Hester Blake's in the clutch of despair. He hastily made another step forward, and as his image fell on the glass, the expression vanished from her face and she turned round with a conventional smile.

"It is you, Mr. Dighton. I sent my partner, I forget his name, to get me something or other, so that I might have a little peace, and when I heard a step, I was inclined to say, 'Hast thou found me, O, mine enemy?'"

"I hope you won't look on me as such, though I'm going to make myself disagreeable; people who give advice always are, although you used to take mine sometimes. How long are you going to keep this up, Isabel?" The name slipped from him unconsciously, as he looked into her white tired face.

If she noticed it, she gave no sign. "I thought I was obeying your advice to the letter. You have always told me I was too much of the hermit," she answered in the same light, artificial tone.

"Yes, but I didn't advise you to burn the candle at both ends in this fashion. It is getting too much even for a strong man like me. I have just been registering a vow that I will stick to work and give up this sort of thing, which is infinitely harder, and I wish you would follow my example. Why, you have only to look at yourself," making a gesture towards the mirror.

"No, no, don't ask me to look at myself," with a shiver, which was perfectly genuine, though her tone was not; "I know I look a perfect hag." Then with a sudden change to passionate earnestness, "Will you let me give it up? Oh, if you would, then I would go away and be quiet—quiet—and find myself again."

"What, is success bearing its usual fruit? Am I to have another Mrs. Mostyn on my hands?" said Dighton, refusing to acknowledge the seriousness of her tone. "Why, at the most there is only a week or two of the season to run now. Hester is hard enough work, I know; but don't lay too much of the blame on her, poor woman. It is this endless racket, and not she that is wearing you out. If for the next week or two——"

"I can't, I can't," she said hastily. "It must be both, if I give up anything—— Oh! thank you so much; I am afraid I have given you a great deal of trouble." The last words were addressed to a tall fair young man who now appeared with an ice, and an apology for the unheard-of time he had been delayed.

Dighton walked home through the waning darkness, inveighing against the perversity of woman to cover his sense of uneasiness. Should he speak now, and assume the control the answer he expected to receive would give him over Isabel? He knew it was what he was longing to do, and even his well-controlled pulses

gave a sudden leap at the thought. But he conquered the impulse. A week or two would set them both free, and then—— The fact was he was by means so sure of his answer as he still thought himself to be. The girl did not respond to a word or a look as she had once done. She was so overwrought, so unlike herself, that a word now might spoil everything, and he had no wish to mar the future he had planned, nor to close the Original prematurely. If only Isabel would be sensible, give up harping on that foolish notion, and stay a little more at home, he concluded with almost marital irritation, as he put his key into his door.

Miss Nugent did not become more sensible ; but however listless, lifeless almost, she would seem on arriving at the theatre, she played with an even more consuming intensity than ever. Parliament sat late, the season dragged on through week after week of breathless, stagnant weather, and it was late August before the Original company was scattered for a brief holiday, after which it was intended to take "Of the World, Worldly," for an autumn season in the provinces.

Isabel had gone to Sleaford Sands, where her lonely childhood had been spent. She had taken a longing to see the place again, she said ; besides, she wanted perfect quietness, and that at least was to be obtained there. Dighton, detained in town by multifarious arrangements for a day or two, determined to follow her as soon as he was free.

Seated in the train at last, steaming away seawards, he let all his usual preoccupations go by the board. London, the Original, Mr. Frank Dighton's success, were for once forgotten. He was a man going to the girl he loved, the one woman—and his experience had been tolerably varied—whom he had really desired as the companion of his days. He tried to laugh at himself a little, and then he let the sweet folly have its own way, and, leaning back in his corner, he dreamed like a lad of twenty of his love's hazel eyes.

From the nearest railway station, there was a long drive to Sleaford Sands, and it was late afternoon before he arrived. How little it was changed, he thought, as he left his inn, a very humble one, the post-office, where some musty groceries were sold, the tiny church and the deserted-looking parsonage behind him. These, with half-a-dozen cottages, formed the village, and beyond

it there stretched a wide flat, part waste land, part empty fields, where the poor crop had already been gathered. A house or two, each cowering behind a few scrubby trees, were scattered here and there at wide intervals, and in the nearest of these he was informed "the Lunnon lady," evidently an object of the utmost wonder and curiosity, was staying. On the other hand there spread out the endless sands, with the wider plain of sea beyond, dimly seen through the heavy grey haze that hung low over this lonely land, and seemed to shut it out still more from contact with the busy world of men.

Dighton's thoughts, as he hurried along the sandy road, were a curious mixture of the past and the present, and as he neared the house he half expected to see the child Isabel come racing to meet him, as she used to do, and throw her arms round him and press her innocent kisses on him.

The farmhouse reached at last, a depressed-looking woman informed him that Miss Nugent was out—she was always out. No, she didn't know where she was; somewhere on the sands likely; perhaps that was she, pointing to a moving speck away out on the brownish-grey expanse; she hoped it was, anyhow, as she had been keeping dinner for hours, and it wouldn't be fit to eat.

"It'll be him she was waiting on; maybe she won't be so mazed-like now he's come," was the woman's comment as she watched Dighton's dwindling figure.

"How did I contrive to exist here? It would drive me melancholy mad now," Dighton thought, as he went on over the oozy sands. No sound broke the windless hush, save the whisper of the far-withdrawn waters; the mist seemed to settle lower. Yes, it was Isabel. She was standing still now, looking away towards the grey ripples that were slowly creeping nearer. She started violently as Dighton came up, and he in his turn could scarcely utter a few words of greeting, so struck was he by the change in her appearance. Of late he had scarcely seen her, save at the theatre, made up for her part; now he felt as if he hardly knew her. It was not so much that she was pale and thin; that unhappily was nothing new; but her eyes, though feverishly bright, had a dilated, unseeing look. When she turned them towards Dighton he felt as if she were seeing not him, but some strange dreadful thing beyond him.

"Shall we walk on? Your worthy landlady is in despair about

you, and perhaps you don't know that there is a pool of water about your feet. It does not do to stand too long on those sands. I remember that from old experience." He tried to speak easily, but to his own ear his voice seemed to sound hollow and unnatural in the silence. Isabel did not speak, but she walked on beside him. "It is so strange to be here again," he went on. "I had my hand on the parsonage gate before I knew, and I shouldn't have been in the least surprised if a little girl who was very fond of me in those days, had come rushing out in her pinafore, and her hair all shaken out of her pigtail. That little Isabel was very kind to me then. Do you ever think of that time now? Do you remember——"

His halting speech was cut through by a sharp cry:

"Remember! Oh, my God, will I ever, ever be allowed to forget? But you—you—what is it to you? How dare you remind me?"

Dighton stared at her in utter blank consternation.

"Isabel, you are overtired, overwrought; I see now how merciless I have been, and this dreary place is too lonely for you," he said gently, trying to take her hand. "You will let me take you away. What is there in the past to distress you? It is very dear to me. I hoped that memory would plead my cause. You may have thought me slack and careless, dear, but those few days apart from you have shown me the truth. I can't live without you. I have come for you to-day; let me care for you. We will go away into the sunshine and forget——"

Again that awful cry:

"Forget! shall I ever forget? Some people say there is no forgetfulness; that we shall always remember. Do you think that can be true?" gripping him by the arm. "Shall I always be alive; never be able to escape from this horror that is *I—I?*"

"Isabel, my love——"

"Love—love—is there some one who still speaks to me of love? Ah, he does not know yet what I am; what I have made myself. But he will know—it is coming. I have tried, how I have tried to hide it——"

The words sounded strangely, hideously familiar. Like a bolt of ice it went to the man's heart—it was *Hester Blake* who was speaking, not Isabel. He stood dumb, as she poured out the passion of despair and agony to which his ears were so well accustomed, while the tide lapped in and in.

As he stood helpless while that thrilling voice filled all the twilight silence, far away in the utmost horizon the sun dipped down, a dull angry red, from under the rim of that heavy cope of grey cloud which had hidden it all day. Sea and sky were flooded with the sudden glare; the haze hung crimson, every ripple was died blood-red, and broke in fiery sparkles on the sand. So startling, so ominous was the change, that for a second Dighton's eyes were forced away from the girl at his side. Then as a larger wavelet curled in and broke round their feet, instinctively he pulled her back.

"Let it come," she cried; "it is what I have been waiting for. If it would only sweep me away and cover me up, and hide me away for ever. But it's no use—no use! No water, not even the deep sea, can wash away what I have done and make me clean again. Would fire burn it out?—they used to tell me of fire—the fire that never shall be quenched. See—see—see!" her voice rising to a shriek as she flung out her arms towards the sullen furnace-glow in the distant west, "it is kindled already; it is seventimes heated! It is waiting for me; I am ready!" and she made a sudden wild plunge forward.

Dighton caught her almost roughly by the arm. He could bear no more.

"Isabel, this is madness;" the words came involuntarily, without thought. Madness! The word choked him even as he uttered it; like a throttling hand it seemed to clutch him by the throat and force the horror that was the truth upon his shrinking heart. His blind selfish folly, his love, the anguish of his cruel loss had all for the moment vanished from his mind. They would return and scourge him soon enough, but now he stood stupefied. His arm fell numb by his side. She turned and looked at him—oh, the piteous change in those beautiful eyes—and then with a laugh that slew the last vain hope, if such were left him, she broke from him and darted away under the lurid, threatening sky, across the empty sands.

In the far west the red sun-rim was all but engulfed in the dark waters; a last sparkle, the light faded, and darkness fell over sea and shore.

When the Original Theatre Company started upon its autumn tour, "Of the World, Worldly," was, to the general disappointment, omitted from its *répertoire*, and Miss Nugent's name no longer headed the bills.

GORDON ROY.

John Biglow's Warning.

By RUSSELL SIDNEY.

YES! Aunt Susan was asleep! Asleep at last! After those many long weary days and nights of fever, pain and ceaseless restlessness, of hard-drawn, laboured breath, of muttering delirium and death-like unconsciousness! Now, at last, the poor, wan, fever-stricken features had relaxed, the tired haggard eyes had closed, the thin nervous hands no longer twitched aimlessly at the bed-clothes, the breathing was soft and regular, and a sleep, tender and peaceful as a little child's, had laid its soothing influence on the exhausted invalid.

Aunt Anna stood by the bedside watching her sister, with her hands clasped in silent, thankful prayer. Her gentle, loving eyes were dim with happy tears; an unspoken pæan of faith and praise surged up in her heart, and expressed itself in a voiceless refrain, "Thank God! Thank God!"

She repeated to herself the parting words of the old family doctor, as with more than his usual sympathy and earnestness of manner, he had bade her "Good-night."

"Remember, Miss Anna, this is the crisis. If your sister sleeps naturally for some hours, humanly speaking, her life is saved. It is rest she wants now, but I cannot give her a sedative; the case will not admit of it. Nature must be the chief restorer. Be careful, if she sleeps, nothing disturbs or awakes her suddenly. Good-night. God bless and keep you both, my dear."

The kind old man had been the nursery friend of their childhood. He had watched the twin sisters grow up to womanhood, and it grieved him sore to see one of his charges battling so long, and, at one time it appeared, so hopelessly, with an insidious form of low prostrating fever. Very near the dark river had his patient been; nearer, he knew, than her watching, faithful nurses had realized. He knew, too, that even now the faltering feet were only just off the brink; the cold relentless flood was still keeping very close, ready to overwhelm and bear her away to the Unknown Land.

Glancing at the clock, Aunt Anna saw it was just gone half-

past ten. Having completed noiselessly some necessary preparations for the night, she opened the bed-room door and, shutting it softly behind her, whispered the happy tidings to two anxious watchers, who, on the way to bed, waited for the last bulletin of the night.

"I shall of course sit up with her all night," said Aunt Anna, "and oh, Mary, keep the house quiet. Above all, tell the children and servants that not a sound must be heard in the morning; even if she does not sleep all night, she might doze off again early, and nothing must wake her. And, John," she added, turning to her brother-in-law, "could you have Rover tied up in the stables to prevent him barking at the milkman?"

The Reverend John Biglow, with his kindly, handsome face lighted up with pleasure on hearing, as he expressed it, that "Susan was out of the wood at last," gave the necessary promise that the dog should be effectually silenced; while his wife, as tremulous with joy and thankfulness as Aunt Anna herself, declared not a sound should be heard through the house till they were assured dear Susan was awake.

With a fond kiss the sisters parted for the night; and noiselessly once more Aunt Anna glided into the sick room, and glancing with loving eyes at the peacefully sleeping invalid, took up her station for the night in a big old-fashioned high-backed chair, chintz-covered, which stood by the bedside, with a small table close to her hand, where a small shaded lamp burnt, and a few medicine bottles lay within reach.

As she laid her weary head against the high back of the chair, her thoughts travelled over many subjects. She knew she had to keep awake; that was the supreme feeling uppermost in her mind. She had had many weary nights of watching before, in turns with her sister Mary and a hired nurse; but never before had such an overwhelming sense of the necessity for extreme watchfulness beset her. Her senses were strained to the utmost to detect and prevent any noise that might disturb the invalid. A nervous excitement gave her ears an acute sensitiveness; she listened for a sound when no sound was. She knew that when the sleep ended, nourishment must be given at once; and she kept going over in her mind what had been prepared for that end. Was all there? She felt anxious lest anything should have been forgotten; and peered through the dim light at the

jelly glass, the milk-jug, the cup of beef-tea, and other delicacies placed on a side table.

Yes! everything was at hand. Nothing was missing; and then her eyes rested on the still form in the bed. Her own dearly-loved twin-sister.

Now that all the busy part of the nursing seemed over; now that there were no fevered restless tossings to watch, no dried, parched lips to moisten, no unintelligible mutterings to fall upon the aching ear, she felt a sudden revelation come over her. She had been so busy before, so very anxious, so determined not to give way, to be always ready to do and to act, that she had had scarcely time to realize how very near, oh, how terribly near, she had been to losing the dearest being in the world to her. What would life have been worth without her? Could she have lived without Susan, her lifelong companion, the sister from whom she had never been parted—no, not for a day—who had shared every pleasure and sorrow of childhood and girlhood with her; whose thoughts, feelings and tastes were as a reflex of her own?

The most beautiful, the most perfect accord had always existed between the two sisters; to observers, remarkable and touching did this union of souls always appear, though outsiders were keen to notice what was never breathed in their inmost thoughts, because never suspected by either, that though there was perfect harmony, one mind held the key-note; it was the frail white invalid on the bed who swayed the destinies and wills of both. Unconsciously to herself, Aunt Susan was the guiding spirit; equally unconscious, Aunt Anna was led and influenced by her sister in the most trivial, as in the weightiest affairs of life.

No wonder, then, that her very soul recoiled and her heart stood still with suppressed emotion at the bare thought of what she might have lost; and even now, how much depended upon a few hours' undisturbed rest.

The silent tears coursed down her cheeks. "Oh, Heavenly Father, spare her to me! I cannot—I could not live without her!"

Poor frail human heart. How little does it know the finiteness of its wants, and the infiniteness of its capability for suffering.

"Susan is all the world to me," she murmured. "Of course there is dear old Mary, but she has John and the children; it isn't the same; we have only one another, Susan and I! My darling, darling sister!"

And then, strangely enough, her thoughts drifted away, far back into the mists of the past, to the happy days of childhood, when the three little sisters played together in the old manor house; when Mary, always so much older and graver, led their games, and later on superintended their studies; always more of the mother than the sister, fulfilling to the utmost the last injunction of a fair, fragile, dying woman, "Take care of my twin baby-girls, Mary; take care of them, dear, for me."

Very deeply had those whispered faltering words sunk into the young girl's heart; from that moment a new responsibility overwhelmed her; from that hour she had put away "childish things;" a quiet, earnest, perhaps slightly unintellectual mind from henceforth was influenced by one thought alone—how to do its best for the young helpless orphans, how most effectually to insure a mother's care over them.

Nobly and well had she carried out her task. Love and unselfishness had been her guiding angels, the mainsprings in the performance of all her self-imposed duties, and both twin-sisters revered and loved her as their wisest and best of counsellors.

Aunt Anna's memories then gathered round Mary's wedding. How well she recalled good, plain-spoken John Biglow coming to court Mary. The girlish jokes and innocent teasings, and the day, when smiling yet serious, with blushes on her fair placid face, she confided to the twins her willingness to be the mistress of the pretty country rectory, if—and the unselfish reservation was but a part of Mary's self—if the girls could do without her. She would be quite close to them; could see them every day, but if they minded very much; if they thought papa would be unhappy and miss her—why, then, of course—though there was a little suspicious choked utterance in the last brave words—she must give John up.

Dear old Mary! How the younger sisters had laughed gleefully at her qualms. Why, a wedding? and Mary's? What could be better? And to have her installed near them as the Lady Bountiful of the parish; as the head of all the local societies; as the organizer of every improvement, and the mainspring of all kinds of reforms in the village—it was too delightful!

And John! They were quite ready to welcome him as a brother, a kind, elder brother; just what they had always wanted. He was so straightforward, so genial and warm-hearted. No one

was more respected and beloved in the county, with the exception of their father, the old grey-headed squire, who would now be the twin-sisters' special care. So the wedding took place, and children's happy voices in a few happy years re-echoed through the old-fashioned garden of the Rectory, and in the dark oak-panelled rooms of the Manor.

It was always a mystery to the rectory children how it was possible that other poor unfortunate mites of humanity got through the vicissitudes of nursery life with only *one* mother; they, happy souls, had *three*—one big mother and two little aunts—mothers; the latter, perhaps, more inclined to be willing slaves and playmates than big mother, who was sometimes busy, and who had father as well to pay a little attention to, but all *mothers* in ceaseless care and devotion, in all the attributes of unselfishness and love. Then had fallen the deep shadow on those peaceful homes of the dear old father's death, just as the younger girls were blossoming into sweet, fair womanhood, and the three sisters were left co-heiresses of many a fruitful field and goodly acre. A decision had, however, soon to be made as to future plans. The manor house was to be sold. It was a large place for ladies to keep up, and the old squire, rightly or wrongly, as opinions differ, not having an heir, had judged that his daughters would be better without it. It was then that John Biglow had shone forth in his true colours. With a delicate sympathy for their sorrow, he forebore to mention business matters to his wife and her stricken sisters till the first burst of grief had passed, but when he knew delay was no longer possible, he placed before them his suggestions for their future.

His rectory doors he threw open to the twin-sisters as long as he lived, and if they liked to make it so, his house was theirs. There was plenty of room in the old-fashioned rambling house, and he would never let the three sisters be divided while it was in his power to keep them together.

Tears of thankfulness were in Mary's eyes; she had scarcely dared to hope that John would harbour such a suggestion; and rightly, she thought, that if such a plan were feasible, it should emanate from him, for she knew many hidden traits in John's nature; that open-hearted as he was, he had a true Englishman's feeling about the sacredness and privacy of home—to him it was more of a sanctuary than to most men—and that it must have cost

him something very dear to his inner consciousness to lay open all its innocent secrets to the ever-present scrutiny of outsiders, even though those were much-loved and appreciative sisters-in-law. She felt that in giving the twins a home he had given of his best. Aunt Anna recapitulated in her mind all the numerous kindnesses they had experienced from the warm-hearted rector during those many bygone years; for it seemed a long time now since they had made the Rectory a common home. The children were fast growing up; the first break had come in the schoolroom circle; the eldest boy was at Rugby, and talking of Oxford at no distant time. But the aunts were still the chosen confidantes of various escapades, secrets and wondrous schemes among the young people—their willing helpers and loving sympathizers in all their joys and sorrows.

"Ah!" sighed Aunt Anna, "how happy the years have been! How good John is always! So helpful, so considerate! What should we two helpless girls have done without him and Mary! And the dear children, how bright they are! So loving and attentive to dear Susan and me!"

She glanced involuntarily at the bed, as her thoughts dwelt on these remembrances; and it struck her suddenly how silent the room was; how very still and motionless the sleeper. She had not made a sign of life for many hours. An undefined terror took possession of Aunt Anna; a fearful question rose in her heart and trembled on her white lips: "Was she breathing? Suppose—such dreadful things had happened before—suppose she had passed away for ever in that death-like sleep!"

With breathless anxiety she crept to the bed-side, and bent silently towards the recumbent form; the regular breathing coming from slightly parted lips sent a thrill of overpowering joy through her veins, and feeling the reaction from that moment of agonized suspense telling upon her, she drew back and turned to the window, by some fresh scene to steady herself and regain her composure.

Drawing back a corner of the blind, she looked out on the Rectory garden, stretching down to a sunk fence, beyond which lay a field of some four acres prettily planted with firs and other trees, and skirted on two sides by a wire fence dividing it from the carriage drive, which, commencing at a white gate opening on to the high road, wound round to a second white gate shutting in the garden in front of the house.

All lay in a flood of unbroken moonlight. It was late in October, but very mild and close for the time of year; the trees in many places had barely changed colour, though in others the damp and rain had denuded them of leaves and their outlines stood out gaunt, sharp and defined. The shadows were very dark and impenetrable, not a leaf stirred, not a sound broke the deathly stillness, and as Aunt Anna quieted her throbbing pulses by gazing on the tranquil scene, her eyes aimlessly followed the curve of the road, white and clear in the moonlight, and the thought crossed her mind, "How plainly one could see even the smallest thing coming along the carriage drive!" But no vestige of life was visible; the moonlight lay unbroken along the whole length. Tired with standing and in a serener mood, she turned at last from the window, and seeing by the clock that it was ten minutes to two, she lay back once more in the old arm-chair, and closing her eyes, fell asleep!

How long she slept she knew not, but she awoke with a frightened start as if some sudden noise had roused her.

Her first fear was for the invalid; had she heard the noise? No, thank God! She was still sleeping tranquilly. But what was the noise? She was certain she had heard, in an undefined manner, in her sleep, some unaccountable knocking or hammering. How strange that with all her care she should have closed her eyes and actually slept! She would make sure such an inadvertence should not happen again, and straightening herself, she sat bolt upright in the chair. Why, what was that?

Not, surely, some one knocking at the front door at that time of night?

Her heart stood still. Yes, as she sat there with every sense on the alert, she heard loud distinct knocks on the oak panels of the old door. There was no knocker, but these were the thumps of a strong man's fist, and they seemed to re-echo through the silent house.

Without a fear as to who might be the inopportune night visitor, only overpowered with anxiety lest anything should awaken her sister, Aunt Anna seized the small night lamp and, hurriedly opening the door, passed swiftly out of the room, closing the door silently after her. Now the Rectory was an old-fashioned house, built on different levels. From the hall one ascended by a wide oak staircase to a lobby lighted by a mul-

lioned stained glass window; with deep recesses for seats in each corner, and before continuing the main flight of stairs, four steps to the left led to the twin-sisters' bed-room, a large, capacious, bow-windowed chamber, looking out, as before said, on the front drive and lawn. As, therefore, Aunt Anna crept down the four stairs, by looking over the banisters she saw directly down into the hall. As she peered into its shadows, holding her little lamp above her head, so as to shine more steadily, she was horrified at the sight of the hall door slowly and surely being pushed open from outside, and as it fell noiselessly back upon its well-oiled hinges, to perceive four men bearing some heavy burden between them, standing full and plain in the white moonlight flooding the carriage drive.

As the door opened to admit them, they prepared to bring in their load, and the slow measured tread of their heavy boots resounded on the tiled floor.

In an agony Aunt Anna bent over the banisters.

"Be silent!" she whispered under her breath. "Go away. Don't make such a noise. You must not awake her. You must not awake her."

The men seemed neither to hear nor regard her. They silently bore their burden into the hall, then turned the corner of the balustrade, and began to mount the stairs, coming slowly towards Aunt Anna.

Petrified she stood; the lamp fell on the men's faces. She knew them all; from childhood they had been familiar to her.

There was old Jim Bates, the village carpenter and joiner, and his eldest son, Tom, who had married a former maid of the sisters; Bob Evans, the wheelwright, who lived next door to the carpenter, was the third, and the fourth was old William Share, the sexton. Why did his presence send a further thrill of terror through her frame? In horrified apprehension she gazed at what they bore. It was an oak coffin with the brass plate and brass nails shining in, and reflecting back the feeble rays of the lamp, and she noticed with some strange feeling of instinctive relief that there was no name engraved on the plate. She recoiled terror-stricken before the approaching bearers, and as she did so, the fearful suggestion flashed upon her that they were bringing that gruesome burden for Susan, for her sister lying sleeping in the silent room beyond.

It was for her, and she was to die!

She turned and fled up the little flight of stairs, planting herself with the air of a lioness at bay in front of the closed door. As the men stumbled up the stairs with their heavy load, and, approached her along the little level part of the lobby, she held out imploring, despairing hands to them. "Go back!" she cried in an agonized whisper. "Go back! Don't bring it here. In God's name, take it anywhere but here!"

They were close up to her now, and paused before her, the foremost with their feet already on the first small stair, and only held back by her attitude of defiance and entreaty. On all their faces was a look of solemn sympathy and unfeigned grief.

"You shall not come in here," she wailed. "Take it away! Take it to some one else! You shall not—must not bring it for her!"

And then slowly shaking their heads, the four bearers began slowly, to her inexpressible relief, to pass her by, and move quietly up the second flight of stairs to the long wide passage upon which opened the doors of the other bed-rooms. Almost facing the top of the stairs was the door of the rector's room, and it was before that door, when they had climbed the whole flight, that the four ghostly visitors deposited their dreaded burden.

Then they turned round; solemnly and silently they descended the stairs, each one, as he passed Aunt Anna, touching his forehead in token of respect. With the muffled sound of their boots still echoing through the hall, they one by one disappeared through the front door, which Aunt Anna, peering over the banisters, saw the last shut behind him, the cold night air blowing chill and dank upon her face as he did so.

And then she awoke!

Awoke to find herself really standing in the lobby, looking over the banisters into the dark empty hall; and the noise of the hall door shutting was the clatter made by the fall of the night lamp out of her hand, down on to the tiled floor below, where the wick still smouldered and spluttered among the *débris* of glass and spilt oil.

The rector's bedroom door opened a second after, and Mary, pale and terrified, came out, asking, "what was the matter?"

"Oh, Mary," sobbed Aunt Anna hysterically. "I have had

such a dream, such a dreadful dream ! It was all so vivid ! But I would not let them bring it to Susan, and they laid it at your door. What does it mean ? what does it mean ?" she cried, wringing her hands.

Sensibly enough Mary did not press for an immediate explanation of this incoherent speech ; soothing her sister gently with her characteristic motherly way, she led her thoughts into another channel.

" Hush !" she whispered softly, " you will awake Susan. She is still asleep, I hope. You are over-tired and over-strained, poor darling. Go and lie down and I will watch by Susan."

Such a suggestion at once roused all Aunt Anna's latent energies ; already remorse smote her that she had left the invalid for a moment. Putting aside her sister she sprang up the stairs and softly opened the door. It was all dark, but the stillness assured her that the invalid still slumbered. She struck a light, and as she did so her eyes fell upon the clock ; it was just on the stroke of two. Her sleep, her terrible dream and her awakening, had all taken place in ten minutes from the time she settled down in the arm-chair after looking out of the window on the long desolate drive.

Mary, a moment after, crept noiselessly into the room. She looked with loving satisfaction at her sleeping sister, and then gazed rather anxiously at the watching one.

" Anna," she said gently, " you are over-tired. If you will not let me remain till morning, you must promise to take three or four hours' complete rest to-morrow as soon as the nurse comes. I'll go back to bed now. I am so glad the fall of the lamp did not awake John. He was so anxious about Susan and could not sleep. He had only just dozed off when I heard that clatter."

With a loving embrace the sisters separated, and Aunt Anna resumed her interrupted vigil, which was not further disturbed till three o'clock, when the invalid awoke refreshed and hungry, actually taking with relish the dainties prepared for her. Then with a little sigh, like a contented child, she turned on her side and fell gently asleep again.

The grey dawn found the patient watcher still wakeful and on the alert. Though the feeling uppermost in her mind was one of supreme thankfulness for what she now considered her sister's certain recovery, the weird vision of the night depressed

and dismayed her. Why had she dreamt it, and why should it have been so real, so distinct that she had actually taken up the lamp in her sleep and walked out of the room with it, closing the door after her? Why had the coffin been placed at John and Mary's door?

Was it for either of them? She shuddered as her wild words re-echoed in her ears:

"Take it to some one else. Take it anywhere but here!"

Why had she said, "Take it to some one else?" The words seemed to bear a sinister import; she ought to have been content with telling those fearful men to bear it out of her sight, out of the house—anywhere.

She was not superstitious, had no faith in presentiments, but even as the day advanced and the sun, bright with gold light dispelling the autumn mists and night shadows, peeped in at the window, with health-giving rays, she still felt the glamour of the night-vision very distinctly upon her; her mind and nerves seemed unhinged and despondent.

When the nurse came up from the village at eight o'clock to take her share of duties for the day in attendance in the sick-room, she escaped to the freedom of the other part of the house with a sense of relief she had not before experienced.

She was glad, too, when breakfast was ready, to see John and Mary enter the dining-room. John, broad-shouldered, burly and hearty; Mary, comely with a matronly plumpness of contour, both looking robust and substantial enough to frighten away a battalion of ghosts.

"Well, Anna," was John Biglow's greeting, "you still look rather scared with this terrible dream, Mary tells me, you awoke the household with last night. And after begging us, too, not so much as to breathe. It was too bad."

"I have not yet heard what the dream was," remarked Mary, as she poured out the coffee. "Do tell us, dear, what frightened you so much, and what was brought to our door."

Aunt Anna glanced nervously around; a rather anxious expression came into her eyes.

"Don't laugh, John," she said entreatingly; "it was a horrid dream, a terrible dream, and it was all so real. I can see it even now," and she covered her face with her hands as if to shut out the ghostly vision.

"Here, dear, take some coffee and an egg. Don't let her tell it now, John; wait till she has had some breakfast. She must rest afterwards, or we shall have her ill next."

"Well, mother," replied the rector, attending studiously to Aunt Anna's wants, and afterwards helping himself to a plentiful supply of ham; "to turn to more substantial stuff than dreams are made of, you must not expect me home to lunch to day. I am on the bench with Charrington and Sir John to try the poaching case in which you know that scoundrel, old Jacob's son, is mixed up. It will go hard with him this time. Evelyn's gamekeeper had a narrow squeak of his life in the fray with that low, drunken fellow. They are all a bad lot and a disgrace to the neighbourhood. I wish they were well out of the place."

"Take care, then, you have lunch somewhere, John dear," said Mary, ever mindful that when engrossed in more important matters, the rector was prone to neglect the wants of the inner man, and suffered accordingly afterwards. If not well looked after when busy he would often go without food from breakfast to late dinner, and a drawn, haggard expression upon his otherwise florid countenance betrayed his forgetfulness of minor comforts. It was the only trait in her husband's character that ever gave Mary a moment's anxiety.

"All right, dear, I'll not forget number one to-day; for, as it happens, the good old doctor, knowing I was on the bench, booked me for his luncheon hour. Somewhere about two, I think he said, and I shan't have much time to get there if we are kept long over Jacob's case."

"Mary," asked Aunt Anna, who had been toying in a pre-occupied manner with her breakfast, and now spoke in a low, nervous voice, "do you believe dreams can be sent as a warning? Can they be sent for any end?"

"Why, Anna, are you still in the land of dreams?" laughed John Biglow, before his wife could answer the query put to her. "Come, out with it. Like all women, you are burning to tell us all particulars, and can't rest in peace or eat your breakfast till you have unburdened yourself. What was your vision? and then I will give my opinion as to its potential warning."

"Only don't joke about it, John, please," petitioned Aunt Anna, still tremulous, and then she recounted her strange dream of the

past night. Mary shuddered and paled a little when she heard the men's burden had been laid at her bed-room door.

"Oh! John," she exclaimed, trembling, "surely it cannot mean——" then she stopped, for her husband held up his hand with a motion to impose silence.

"Let us hear to the end," he answered.

There was little more to tell, and Aunt Anna lay back in her chair when she had finished the recital, saying, "Now, John, can you, can any one, tell me why I should have dreamt a horrid thing like that?"

Honest John Biglow passed his hand through his iron-grey hair and then over his bushy, carefully-trimmed whiskers; his face bore a subdued expression of amusement, kept in check by the serious manner of the narrator and the unexpressed anxiety of his wife.

"Well!" he answered, after a moment's pause, turning his kind brown eyes first upon one face and then on the other, "I consider this terrible vision very easy of explanation. Anna was over-tired, her nerves were strained with anxiety and watching, she was therefore very susceptible to outward influences. You do not remember, either of you, I daresay, that yesterday evening after dinner, just before Anna went off to Susan's room for the night, Carter came in to say old Samson's funeral was finally fixed for Saturday, and I remarked to Mary that for such a poverty-stricken family they were going to a great deal of expense ordering an extra-thick oak coffin; and how Mrs. Samson had told me with some pride, when I called to see her in the afternoon, that the brass plate would be 'real handsome!' Poor soul! she appeared to derive some comfort and satisfaction from the bare idea of spending more on the old man in his coffin than she had ever dared to devote to his wants in his life-time. Though you did not take much notice at the time, Anna, the words were, if one may so say, photographed on your memory, and came out in a bizarre form in your few moments of unconsciousness. Then I had mentioned old Share the sexton as being rather cantankerous about the site of the grave; that accounts for *his* appearance, and as he is often in the company of the three others, in fact oftener than I like in the neighbourhood of 'The White Feathers,' it is not surprising they should be together in your dream. As to the noises," continued the rector, "who has

not heard the most inexplicable sounds in the silence of the night? I, for one, have been startled by that old oak wardrobe of yours, Mary, giving forth the most terrific and ghostly groans, creaks and squeaks in the dead of night; and probably it was some article of furniture in the room relieving itself by a more than ordinary paroxysm that, to your sensitive ear, Anna, was magnified into those portentous knocks appearing to wake you from slumber. Your little experience in somnambulism was but the outcome of your over-strained nerves and the acute tension of your senses reacting upon your body and controlling its movements. These common-place facts explain the matter of your dream clearly enough. Now, *why* you dreamt it appears equally plain," and the rector spoke gravely, with sympathetic kindness. "You were, my dear girl, with all of us, suffering under a great anxiety for dear Susan; it must have been in your mind, as in ours, that death was very near her last night. It lay in God's hands whether she would be spared to us or no. Everything, humanly speaking, depended on her rest being undisturbed; it was therefore natural that even in sleep your mind should still retain the fear of any noise, and when old Samson's coffin came stumping up the stairs, you naturally expressed stern disapproval of such an eccentric proceeding."

"But they left it at your door, John! Why did they not take it away altogether?"

"I cannot answer for the reasons of all your ghostly visitors' ambiguous actions," replied John Biglow smiling; "but knowing both Bates' and Evans' inherent laziness, I should say they showed their wisdom in putting down what must have been a pretty stiff load, at the first door they came to, and I have no doubt the two others were equally pleased at not having the trouble of taking it back to the village."

"John," said Aunt Anna reproachfully, "you are making fun of it after all."

"No, Anna, not at all. But do not let your thoughts dwell any longer on empty visions; there is too much in this work-a-day world to engross our best attention, and also," added the rector reverently, "to lay claim to our deepest feelings of gratitude. Dear Susan is spared to us, through God's mercy; and having given us such a direct answer to our prayers, surely we can leave the rest to Him, always remembering that living or dying we are the Lord's."

His voice sounded deeper and fuller than usual, and in the silence that followed there was a suspicious moisture in his listeners' eyes, but with a bright smile he looked affectionately at his wife with his kind brown eyes, and nodded his head reassuringly at her once or twice :

"Yes, Mary, if I don't come home to the minute this afternoon, you are not to think that Anna has killed me with poor old Samson's coffin. I shall send back the dog-cart by Wilkins, and walk home ; or maybe I shall get a lift part of the way with Sir John. I have several things to attend to in Spalding to-day. There is the school-inspector—I must have a talk with him about the rates ; they are much too high. I have to see Smith about the sale of that bay, and I am sure I don't know if it wouldn't be best after all to turn the long acre field into pasture next year. I must have a chat with Tidmarsh and get his opinion." For, like many parsons, the rector farmed his glebe, and found it by no means a paying concern.

Aunt Anna left the room brightened and invigorated. She felt in the presence of that calm, steadfast man, full of the duties of life, busy and thoughtful for others, that vague fancies and nervous fears were incongruous, and with lightened heart she paid her daily visit to the nursery and schoolroom, to repeat to sympathetic hearers the glad news of Aunt Susan's health-restoring sleep. Afterwards, at Mary's urgent request, she went into a quiet, cosy bedroom and lay down to rest. Just as she was dropping off to sleep she heard the dog-cart with her brother-in-law driving off from the hall door, and she listened dreamily to the departing wheels, as they glided smoothly over the long carriage-drive.

When she awoke it was luncheon time. The doctor had been and pronounced his patient progressing more favourably than he had expected ; he would, however, call again late in the evening, as she was still very weak, and might require stronger stimulants than he had yet ordered.

"The dog-cart, too, has come back," added Mary, giving all the morning's news, as she divided her attention between her sister and the large joint she was carving for many hungry applicants, for luncheon was the children's dinner-hour, and all the small fry were gathered round the table.

"Wilkins says his master told him he would be detained till late in the afternoon, so we were not to be anxious about him.

Dear old John! how careful he is of us! So thoughtful for all our little fears and womanish feelings!"

In Mary's eyes there never was and never could be a greater hero than plain John Biglow! Perhaps she was right in the main; for of such large sympathetic natures and honest determined wills, self-sacrificed in the path of duty, are the world's noblest heroes made.

The day passed quietly on; slowly the sun sank behind a bank of violet clouds, and the quickly-gathering autumn twilight fell around. Aunt Anna and Mrs. Biglow were standing together in the sick chamber, the invalid was lying calmly resting; the nurse busied herself tidying the room, and in making her preparations for the night, while the two sisters stood in the bow-window looking out upon the drive. Mary was repeating her determination to stay up that night with Susan while Anna had a complete rest, when the latter suddenly exclaimed, at the same time catching hold of her sister's arm to attract her attention:

"Look, Mary, there's a light spring cart with four men just driving in at the white gate!"

It was the further gate, and the two women at the window watched it wending its way rapidly towards the house, with a silent fascination. The short October twilight had faded so rapidly that it was already nearly dark, too dark for them to distinguish the men's faces. As the cart stopped at the front door, Mary peered down into the drive, but the vehicle and its occupants were too immediately underneath for her to be able to see anything further.

"How strange!" she murmured, "that they should come to the front door. What can it be? I will just run down, Anna, and see."

She quickly left the room. A moment after Aunt Anna heard the hall door open, and a smothered sound of voices, a faint cry, and a man's voice calling for a light.

It was still comparatively early, and the hall lamp was not lighted. The nurse had just put a match to a little hand-lamp, a fac-simile of the one broken in the catastrophe of the past night, and Aunt Anna, snatching it up, hastily ran out of the room with it in her hand. An undefined fear took possession of her; she looked over the banisters before she went further down the stairs with a nameless expectation of disaster, and what she saw froze her terror-stricken to the spot.

It was the realization of her dream of the previous night ! There were the four men, and they were carrying slowly and painfully a heavy burden between them into the dimly-lighted hall. Mary was crouching white, speechless and horrified in a corner ; the men passed her with pitying glances and slowly ascended the stairs. As they laboured up the light fell upon their faces. They were Jim Bates, the carpenter, and his son Tom ; Bob Evans, the wheelwright, and old Share, the sexton ; but the burden they bore was not a coffin, it was the body of a man placed hastily on a hurdle, and as the handkerchief which had been thrown over the head fell upon the ground, Aunt Anna looked on the white calm face of her dead brother-in-law, John Biglow !

Yes ! the dream had come true ! and in at the door where the night before she had seen them lay the coffin, the four living men carried in the earthly remains of the rector.

They told their story afterwards to the sorrow-stricken household. By the roadside, as if he had thrown himself down in a sudden paroxysm of pain, with his hand clutching tightly the vest over his heart, they had found on returning from Spalding market, where they had driven in the wheelwright's light cart, the body of John Biglow ! His face bore no trace of pain, only a slight contraction of the temples and about the lines of the mouth.

More particulars came to light later on. How the rector had hurried from one place to another that day ; how by some misadventure he had not been in time for the doctor's lunch, and had gone without breaking his fast, declaring he would make all the better dinner at home ; how Sir John Evelyn had driven him, late in the afternoon, to the cross roads, and thinking he looked fagged and tired, wished to drive him to the Rectory ; how the rector would not hear of taking Sir John out of his way ; and how the last seen of him, was waving his hand in a smiling farewell as he turned to toil up the long steep ascent of Great Norton Hill. At the top, among the autumn flowers and rank grass of the roadside, he had laid himself down and died.

Ah ! the pity of it !

And who can interpret Aunt Anna's dream ? Was there a warning in it ? Was it a note of alarm from the shadowy shore of that unknown country whose portals are called Death ?

These things are hid from our eyes.

An Unanswered Summons.

THE event I am about to record happened on the twenty-fifth of December, 18—. It is my wish to narrate it simply. I noted the facts down at the time, and in chronicling them I allow myself no exaggeration. Nor do I pose as a believer in the supernatural, being by nature practical. A man of different temperament might find pleasure in dwelling on so important an incident in his life; with me it is otherwise. My time is fully occupied, I have little leisure for thought, nor am I of a nature to take delight in such researches as are pursued by the Psychical Society. The theory of the dual consciousness has no attraction for me; idealistic philosophy is not in my line; I am not concerned about a transcendental self. Briefly, I lay no claim to any higher aspirations than to increase my practice (it is already considerable), to do my duty by my patients, and to provide somewhat more lavishly for my wife and children.

I am pre-eminently a family man; I believe in the sacredness of the marriage tie, and in the responsibilities of parents. In point of fact, I am a fair type of a modern Englishman in that respect, whatever neurotic novels may say to the contrary. My wife, who is at the present moment sitting opposite me, busily stitching at some dainty garment for one of the youngsters, is beautiful in my eyes still, but I hesitate to say how others may view her. At the time I married her, however, no man in his senses would have ventured to dispute her charms; they were undeniable. It pleases me at this moment to relate how, when and why I came to woo her. I offer no explanation; a subtler brain may supply one, or, as is more probable, my recital may be met with derision. Still, facts remain; they can neither be explained away, nor can they be set aside by simple, barefaced contradiction. For my want of literary style I do not apologize. I am but a plain medical practitioner; I can diagnose a case as well as most men; if I do so unsatisfactorily I submit to criticism, but I am no story-teller. Yet it pleases me to unburden my mind; though none, I take it, are compelled to read, should the process fail to interest them, or the manner of it grate on their fastidious taste. Having little capital at my command, and small spirit for speculation, I did not commence my career by buying

a practice in a populous neighbourhood; on the contrary, I elected to settle down in a small country town, which we will call, for present purposes, Hamsworth. There were but two doctors in the place; one was a homœopath, the other an allopath. From the former I flattered myself I had little to fear, the latter was growing old, and had an extensive practice, since there was no rival in the field. Two years before a certain Paul Rattray had also practised in the town, so I was told; but his skill was small and his habits unsteady; he had made a moon-light flitting, leaving nothing behind him but a bad reputation and many debts. I inquired where he had lived; oddly enough the house was at that moment to let. I went over it at once, and after a few hours' consideration took it, finding the rent within my means. I never had cause to regret the step.

To sit down and wait for patients is not inspiring; this I found, to my cost, but I was by temperament optimistic, and I made the time pass by dint of constant occupation. It was not often that I was low-spirited, or meditated on my loneliness; but the twenty-fourth of December found me, I must confess, somewhat blue. I sat hovering over the fire, succeeding in warming my feet, but feeling an unpleasant draught at my back. The weather was exceptionally cold, I was unconscionably tired; I rose with sudden resolution, and went upstairs to bed.

I had visited all my patients that day; they were six in number; I had no right to be either mentally or physically exhausted. If I had been asked what I most desired at that particular moment I think I should have said an epidemic; yet I was a merciful man, and fond, in a mild way, of my fellow creatures.

I slept soundly until two in the morning, when I found myself sitting upright, listening intently. Some one was calling through the speaking tube. I sprang out of bed and listened. At first I could not catch the words. "Say it again," I shouted. The sentence was repeated slowly and distinctly, "Come at once, she is dying." No address was given, the omission did not make any impression upon me. For this I cannot in any way account; I was neither agitated nor excited. I dressed rapidly, hurried downstairs, closed the street door behind me and looked around. The wind was piercingly cold; I shivered. The night was clear and starlit. In the full glare of my red lamp stood a woman. She was of medium height, and her figure, a singularly grace-

ful one, was enveloped in a fur-lined cloak, the hood of which covered her head. She glanced over her shoulder ; her face was white as death, her eyes gleamed, though the lids were swollen from weeping. I could see her so distinctly that I even observed a scar on the left temple. Soft curls of brown hair lay on her forehead. I was a doctor, eager for a new case ; but I was human, her beauty attracted me irresistibly. I advanced and would have spoken to her ; she did not appear to be aware of my presence, but ran on swiftly, and I followed. It was all I could do to keep her in sight, so rapid was her pace ; the wind blew fiercely, making progress difficult. The way was long ; we left the town behind us and crossed a barren common, never slackening our speed. I was not sorry when she paused before the door of a lonely cottage, the walk had not been too pleasant. I passed my hand over my stinging eyes ; the gesture was rapid and mechanical, occupying, so it appeared to me, but a fraction of a second, yet my guide had disappeared. I was alone. I shook myself as though I had slept, and would cast off a strange dream, but was sufficiently wide awake withal, and not over pleased at my position.

However, it was incumbent on me to enter the house to which I had been so urgently summoned. A light was burning in an upper window, presumably that of the apartment occupied by my future patient. I knocked, but no one answered me. Then, I found to my surprise that the door was on the latch. Without giving myself time for consideration, acting, as had been the case throughout, on impulse, in a way foreign to my character, I walked upstairs and stood outside the door of the room wherein I had seen the light burning. I cannot in any way account for that or for my subsequent conduct ; I set it down as it occurred. I stood and listened. For a few moments the silence was complete. Presently I heard words already familiar to me. "Come at once, she is dying." They were followed by others, uttered in heartrending tones : "No, no, he will not come !"

I entered the room unhesitatingly ; it was small and barely furnished, but in perfect order, and not without traces of refinement. On the narrow bed lay a girl ; her face was turned towards me, her eager eyes interrogated mine. I recognised her at once ; the features were sufficiently remarkable to have impressed themselves on my memory ; the scar on the left temple was not required to strengthen my conviction ; it was already sufficiently strong. I

stood and gazed down upon her, utterly at a loss to understand the situation; her cheeks were flushed, her breath came short and quick; she wore a nightdress frilled at the throat and wrists. I glanced round the room, but saw no traces of the fur-lined cloak in which she had been wrapped so recently. Had it been there the mystery would have been equally insoluble, as sufficient time to effect a change of attire, however rapid, had not elapsed.

As I bent over her, she raised herself, laid her hand on my shoulder, and said in reproachful accents.

"You are too late, she is dead! Look at her eyes how they stare at you; look at her stiff lips, they are speaking to you now. 'You might have saved me,' they say, but you would not come; you could sleep while a fellow creature was in agony. God forgive you. I never can."

She pointed with her finger to a farther corner of the room, but I saw nothing. I knew that she was delirious, yet her words affected me strangely.

With the instinct of my profession I endeavoured to detach my attention from all that was extraneous, and to concentrate it on my patient. I found her to be suffering from pleurisy; the case was undoubtedly a serious one. I rang the bell without receiving any answer. I then took upon myself to make a room-to-room visitation throughout the house. Owing to its limited size this task was soon completed, and it became evident to me that, strange as it might seem, my patient and I were its sole occupants. There was some wood in the grate, I lit a fire as quickly as I was able; the room was very cold and I felt that it was important to raise the temperature at once. Then I sat down and waited patiently for a few moments, turning over in my mind what I had best do next. I had not much time for consideration. Before long the door was opened gently, and an elderly lady, wearing a bonnet and shawl, appeared on the scene. She showed a surprise that was not unwarrantable at my presence.

"Dr. Haviland, I believe," she said.

I bowed assent.

The words that followed took the form of a question.

"How did you know of my niece's illness?"

I was puzzled. To say that the invalid herself had fetched me was to arouse in my interrogator's mind the suspicion that I was insane; therefore, I made an intentionally incoherent reply.

She was excited and anxious, it was on this account, I presume, that she allowed it to pass. I ascertained that her niece had been ailing for a few days, and had gone to bed at eight o'clock. At one, Mrs. Morris, who slept in an adjoining room, had been alarmed by hearing her speak in an excited tone. Being unused to illness, and evidently not particularly strong-minded, she had, on discovering her condition, at once run distractedly for Dr. Field, the elderly practitioner already alluded to, but had not found him at home. She had hesitated whether to fetch me, but fearing what might happen in her absence had returned at once.

On inquiring whether Dr. Field was their regular medical attendant, she informed me that neither she nor her niece troubled doctors much, and I observed a certain shortness in her manner which discouraged further enquiries. Nor was I, for my own part, desirous of making any, my only object being to avoid transgressing professional etiquette.

I endeavoured while giving my orders to Mrs. Morris to quiet some of her alarms, although I could not reconcile it with my conscience to hide from her that this was a serious case, which would call forth all the skill of the nurse as well as that of the doctor. Others of my profession have more faith in trained nurses than I, or maybe less faith in the services prompted by a loving heart, which can make clumsy fingers expert and dainty. A few words with Mrs. Morris convinced me that she was devoted to her niece. I looked into her troubled eyes, I watched the tremulous mouth settle into firmness, and I decided in my own mind that she would be able to attend to her satisfactorily. The sequel proved that I was not mistaken.

She and I, God helping us, fought a hard battle with death; sometimes his grim arms seemed about to close around the fair girl who lay so patiently, too weak to speak, but always ready to smile on us in grateful acknowledgment of our slightest services; sometimes our hearts sank within us. But at last the glad day came when I could pronounce her out of danger, and I think I shall never forget how I felt. I feared lest my joy should be too apparent, I dreaded lest the story of my love should be written on my face so plainly that all who ran might read. For I was but a matter-of-fact man, and it appeared to me absurd that I should have parted with my heart so readily. Nay, I even struggled against fate, feebly and spasmodically,

until the time came when it was no longer possible. I told myself that I was in no position to marry, least of all to marry Mary Morris, who had not a penny in the world, for I had ascertained that she was a daily governess, earning the miserable pittance conferred on educated labour. But a spell seemed to be cast over me, I was as one enthralled; as blindly as I was led on the morning of the twenty-fifth, was I led now. I was hopelessly in love with a woman who was in so sore a bodily strait as to be hardly aware of my presence. When she was fully conscious, when we two conversed together, I accepted the fact without demur; I realised that the hand of fate is too powerful for man to set aside.

It happened on the twentieth of January. We were alone together; Mary sat in an easy chair, and I had held her slender wrist a little longer than was absolutely necessary for professional purposes. She was moved that afternoon to speak gratefully to me, making more of my poor services than I thought fit, though it was pleasant enough to listen to her praises. The light was waning, the firelight fell on her face, casting a red glow as my lamp had done on that eventful evening.

A longing to question her seized upon me, but I felt that I must wait a little longer. I feared to try her strength. We were silent for a short space, presently she spoke.

"I shall always be grateful to you for attending me," she said gently, "but you have never explained how it happened. And you know, Dr. Haviland, you are about the last doctor in the world my aunt or I should have sent for, since you are Dr. Rattray's successor."

"But what of Dr. Rattray?"

"If you had asked me a month ago I should have told you that I hated him," she replied; "but I have been so close to death that I cannot say it now. I hate none."

"How did Dr. Rattray offend you?" I asked, for I dreaded further questioning, and I felt that it might be averted by carrying the war into the enemy's camp.

She pushed her hair from her forehead, a gesture with which I was now familiar.

"I loved my mother very dearly," she said, "she was all in all to me. I think I would have given my life for her; but her health was frail. When we came here as utter strangers, I, in my ignorance, called in Dr. Rattray. On Christmas Eve, two years ago, my mother was seized with a sudden attack of syncope. She and I

lived alone, as my aunt and I live now. I had no neighbour whose aid I could seek. The weather was intensely cold. I took a fur-lined cloak of my mother's, threw the hood over my head, and ran for the doctor. I spoke to him through the tube."

She paused, her eyes were moist, her lip trembled, yet I could not keep silence. I was too anxious for information.

"What did you say?" I asked breathlessly. Yet I knew without asking. The words had recurred to me over and over again since Christmas Eve. She clasped her hands together, her lips were set firm, but her answer came at once.

"When I blew down the tube," she said, "he asked who was there. After I had told him, I said, 'Come at once, she is dying.' He promised me he would, but he never came; he fell asleep again, and my mother died for want of medical aid."

The flush had faded out of her cheeks; with a woman's tact she strove to master her emotion, feeling, doubtless, that the position was a strained one for me.

"Dr. Rattray was a disgrace to his profession," she continued; "he did not care whether his patients lived or died, so long as he could drink his fill. I shall never forgive myself for having chosen him as medical attendant for my dear mother. But," she added more lightly, "you have not told me how it is I had the good fortune to secure your services. My aunt herself is puzzled. She tells me you arrived in her absence. She went for Dr. Field, you know."

I strove to answer, but in vain; words failed me, my embarrassment could not be concealed.

"Tell me!" she said gently, leaning forward with her hands lightly clasped together, and her face upturned.

I did so, plainly and straightforwardly, keeping nothing back. After I had spoken a hush fell upon us both. The weirdness of the incident I recorded could not be ignored by the most practical of minds.

"I do not understand," she said slowly.

"And I have no explanation to offer," I replied.

The situation is the same now as then. It is Christmas Eve, and my wife and I sit together by our own fireside. We still inhabit the house once tenanted by Paul Rattray. Night after night messages reach me through the speaking tube, sometimes more persistently than I could wish, but they are of a prosaic order. For that which came to me on the morning of December 25th, 18—, I have no explanation to offer. I do not understand.

L. E. TIDDEMAN.

A Country House in Andalusia.

THE sun had been shining all day long on an old courtyard which formed the entrance to a country house in Southern Spain; vines and creeping plants draped the massive stone walls, and flowers were blooming here and there in haphazard disarray. The building itself, a huge structure, looked much more like a ruined fortress than the dwelling place of an English family, and was situated outside a small provincial town, some five miles or so from the mines which were its *raison d'être*. In the Cathedral hard by the Christian ritual has long since replaced Mohammedan rites; at the fountain beside it the faithful no longer perform enforced ablutions, but Tobarito, the water-carrier, gay in his striped and tasselled mantle, might be found instead, gossiping with some of the gipsies, a group of chattering girls washing the vegetables for dinner, or the family linen, according to the hour of the day.

Tobarito's pictorial value was high, undoubtedly, but his ways were very aggravating; sometimes when he brought in the drinking water for the day's consumption—which had to be sought a mile off—he would lead his donkey right into the great hall and up to the dining-room door, so as to save himself the trouble of carrying the beautiful great white jars which were slung on its back; usually that much-enduring animal would slip on the threshold and the result would be a deluge of water on the carpet. After such a catastrophe Doña Carolina, the house-mistress, was apt to remark that for her part she preferred the practical to the picturesque, but that was only—as her husband, Don Henrique, often assured her—because she had no proper sense of the fitness of things; indeed Tobarito had no idea that he was picturesque. His real name was Cristobal.

In the courtyard of the house where Doña Carolina lived, a family party was assembled, and most of its members had thrown themselves down in attitudes suggestive of a desire for repose after considerable exertion of some kind. They had not been doing anything in particular, however; they were merely giving way to the climate, for though the month of April had scarcely run its course, the air was still and warm, and heavy with sweet scents from a neglected-looking garden belonging to the house,

where flowers and weeds had tangled themselves together in a fashion infinitely more effective than the most carefully cultivated series of beds that ever gladdened the heart of an English horticulturist. One person in the group had declined to succumb to the prevailing languor and indolence, for she was wide awake and knitting industriously; her rosy cheeks and simple attire formed a great contrast to the appearance of the other members of her sex, whose pale faces and voluminous draperies betrayed the influence of a hot sun and a Spanish dressmaker. She had only just arrived from an English home to pay a long visit to her cousins, and it was her birthday which was being celebrated. "If these good people imagine this is the way to keep a birthday," she was saying to herself, "I think it is my duty to undeceive them as soon as possible," and she turned to her nearest neighbour, an Englishman about thirty or so, who was smoking a cigarette with half-closed eyes.

"If you are not too sleepy, Mr. Irving, will you wake up and tell me what you do here when you amuse yourselves, or am I to suppose that this kind of thing always goes on when there is a saint's day, and you have a little leisure time?"

The person addressed raised himself and regarded her with an amused glance.

"Tennis, do you mean, and that kind of thing? Well, it is too warm now, but if you like riding, we can take you up to the Sierra during the next three or four weeks, if you do not mind starting very early in the morning; that is to say, if Doña Carolina will consent. There is a chance of brigands always, and you would have to rough it, but it might do to begin with. After a short time you will take to idling, whenever possible, as we do."

"That sounds delightful. By the way, no one seems to recognize their own English names. Why have you all taken up the habit of calling each other by Spanish ones?"

"No Spaniard can learn our names, and in provincial life the surname is never used. It has been impossible to avoid falling into their ways; you see we are a colony of seven people, and they are pretty numerous. I am Don Carlos, your cousin's husband is Henrique, and so on. You will become Elenita, your name being Helen. But we don't keep to it always when no Spaniards are present, and I have no objection to your calling me Charlie, if you like, if I may be permitted to address you as Nelly."

Miss Carruthers looked the least bit offended at this speech. But her companion's eyes were so friendly as well as so mischievous, that it was difficult to be angry with him; he noted her glance of displeasure, however.

"Excuse me for forgetting that to-day you are quite grown up. Eighteen, are you not? But you will get to understand us in time, and see how a long exile from one's own country and people changes one's ideas and manners.* Not in essentials, though, only in minor matters. Do you take in who the people are that are here to-day?"

"Not in the least. Carolina introduced them all together in the prevailing fashion."

"Then let me tell you. That black-eyed man over by the wall is half English only; he is Manuel by name, and has an English wife. He is a very good fellow, so is she, and it has turned out a very happy marriage; she is known as Rosita. Then those two other men talking together are Carleton and Aylmer, and the next is old Hamilton—we always call him old Hamilton. You will find these three do still recognize their own names, so I will not give you the native equivalent. This girl just coming in under the archway is English too; she lives over at Santa Elena with her father. We are all in love with her, because we none of us take to Spanish girls, and the situation is getting embarrassing, as you may imagine. It is most fortunate that you have arrived."

"What is her name?"

"We call her Margarita. She is coming up to you; let us go to meet her."

Nelly herself was fair and pretty to look on, but the girl coming towards her was, she thought, the most beautiful creature she had ever seen in her life. After a few words of greeting she was taken possession of by the others, and Irving, who had taken a fancy to Nelly, carried her off to where they had been sitting before. Nelly was very shy amongst so many strangers, and glad to have some one to take charge of her. Presently her host came up; he was a young fellow of eight-and-twenty, and liked his wife's little cousin too.

"I am afraid it is very dull for you, Nelly," he remarked, by way of saying something kind. "Or is Irving making himself agreeable for once? In England we should be 'doing' something,

I know, but you see how it is here. However, Carolina and I will only be too glad to further any views you may have."

"She is going up to the Sierra with us by way of a beginning," said Irving. "It is no use your objecting, and I mean to talk your wife over," as his friend made a gesture of astonishment. "Margarita Rivers will be sure to want to come too."

"And who do you suggest as a chaperon for your two young ladies, my dear fellow, may I ask? You know my wife would as soon think of starting for the moon, and I may not be able to act in that honorable capacity either."

"We will take some respectable Spanish woman."

"I hope you may get her." So saying he left the two together, and went to tell his wife of Irving's proposal. The idea was taken up warmly by those of the party who had still sufficient energy left to be enthusiastic over anything, and it was finally settled that the party should consist of Don Henrique, the host, Irving, Hamilton, Margarita Rivers and Nelly, with Rosita, the married sister of the former, as chaperon. Carleton and Aylmer declared they would be required to console Doña Carolina if anything happened to her husband, and they were to remain behind. These mountain expeditions—whose ostensible reason was business, as the more distant mines had to be visited in due course—might be prolonged from three days to ten, and that lady, it was well known, spent the time in imagining every possible disaster.

"I am afraid it is rather selfish of us to go off and leave her as we propose to do," said Nelly to Mr. Hamilton, a tall, fair man who had been watching her a good deal, unknown to herself. "Does she never join her husband when he goes away like that?"

"No; you see there are the babies, and the house where we shall sleep is not provided with many comforts. I think you ought to be told that some of us think it rather risky to take ladies to these lonely mountain hamlets, though. Still, there will be three of us Englishmen and two trustworthy Spanish servants, Tobalito, the ornamental, and José, the muleteer. When Henrique goes alone he never will take more than one servant, and that of course is unsafe; two men can be easily overpowered."

"Then there really is some risk?"

Hamilton did not answer for a minute or two; his thoughts had strayed over to the cemetery yonder, where his young wife lay. Seven years ago he had started one bright morning for this

very ride they were now discussing ; she had been strangely unwilling to let him go. Just as he was about to mount his horse he noted that her eyes had filled with tears, and he turned to her and kissed her again, bidding her be a good brave girl and not give way to foolish fears. About ten miles from the town a shot had been fired at him by a discharged miner who had a grudge against him, and his horse fell, throwing him also. Some muleteers who were not far off hurried into the town with the news that he had been murdered, and the poor little wife—an English Nelly like the one before him—had laid down on a bed of pain from which she never rose. When Irving called in the evening with a message from her husband to assure her he was unhurt, the Spanish nurse told him she was delirious and could not understand. He had insisted on being taken to the room, thinking that the sound of her own tongue might rouse her, but the sight that met his eyes there he never forgot ; a little dead child lay on her arm. She had killed it herself, the nurse said, knowing no better. The shock of the news she had heard that morning had been too much for the poor little Señora. When her husband returned he found her still and cold as marble too.

"I beg your pardon," he said, recovering himself with a start, unconscious that he had been staring hard at the girl, who reminded him strongly of his dead wife ; she was of the same type.

"Risk, did you say? Well, there are brigands in these parts, but they know better than to attack such a strong party as ours will be. Of course, if you were to stray far from the house alone, or do anything silly like that, you might get into trouble."

The girl had often wondered why he looked at her so fixedly at times, and seemed so preoccupied ; she did not know his story then. Irving told it to her a few days later.

"He and I have been great chums ever since," he remarked. "I used to think him a dull sort of fellow, and wondered what made his wife adore him so. She knew, but I didn't. He is the best friend I have, now. You might almost be her sister, you know, you are so like her."

The proposed expedition to the Sierra was fixed for the following month, and Henrique urged his wife strongly to join it. He wanted to make the place into a summer station, as the heat of the plains at that season was unsuited to the health of English girls, and the only alternative was to send his wife and child to

one of the few sea-side resorts on the Spanish coast, all more or less uncomfortable, and fully two days' journey from L——, the town in which they lived.

"You women will begin to fade if you stop down here all the year," he had said to her, "and it makes these other fellows afraid to marry. Three young wives have died here within the last few years, and unless they take Spanish girls, which isn't desirable, they will remain bachelors. If you would set the example, we could soon make a little colony up in the mountains, and then we should have a pleasant little English coterie of our own. From May to October the weather is perfect at that altitude."

"But suppose some of those horrid men came and carried off baby."

"You would never be left without a strongescort. You know that I hate to part with you for so long, but it will be my duty to send you away to the north this year, if you won't do what I wish."

"Well, if the girls bring back a good report, and nothing dreadful happens while you are up there, I promise to go up in May and try it," and with this he was satisfied.

When the eventful day at length drew near, Nelly felt more excited at the prospect before her than she had ever done in her life. All sorts of preparations had to be made; the *manaadera*, the woman who came every morning to do the marketing, was desired to buy up everything fit to eat in the market, and as she interpreted the order literally, there was a famine in the town. The English colony sent up to say they were all coming to dine with Doña Carolina in consequence, but this was easily arranged, for all were the best of friends.

The procession started early next morning, riding most of the time in single file, for there were no roads. They looked rather like the members of a travelling circus, Irving remarked to Nelly, at whose side he was now usually to be found in his leisure hours, for they all rode mules covered with the usual trappings, and Tobalito and José both wore different costumes, the latter being a native of Valencia. Then he began to entertain her with gruesome stories of raids committed from time to time in that wild, lonely district.

"But whatever happens, there is a man apiece for you young ladies," he added in reassuring tones, as he thought he saw her face fall a little; "you need not be nervous."

"It will not be your fault if I am not. Which of you is to be my protector, pray?"

"Cannot you guess?" he answered, looking her full in the face.

She coloured hotly, which was exactly what he desired; nothing pleased him so much as to know that a word or look from him would instantly have that effect upon her, should he choose to have it so. She was a great contrast to Margarita Rivers, whose beautiful dark eyes looked into other people's with calm dignity; the latter was a strange, reticent girl, and though amiable and pleasant to all her admirers, could never be said to distinguish one above the other in the smallest degree, Nelly thought. She said as much to her companion.

"Ah!" he answered, "do you think so? For my own part I believe she has a preference. Time will show."

They dismounted for a brief spell of rest and lunch. Irving found a seat for Nelly under the shade of a great boulder on a carpet of hay fern, at which she exclaimed in delight. He was something of a botanist, and promised her many floral treasures later on; meanwhile she was content with the bunch of wild lavender and yellow jasmine which he placed in her lap. The asphodels were growing thickly in the plain below, and large rose-coloured convolvulus blossoms twined themselves in a tangle about her feet. Irving went to Henrique and begged him to let his cousin stay a little longer, she was so interested in the flowers; the others could ride on and they would overtake them quickly. Don Henrique smiled, and glanced with some suspicion at the young man, but he liked and trusted him. He gave the required permission, adding:

"She is under our charge, you know, old chap, and is still quite a child, thank heaven. You won't forget that, Charley."

Irving hesitated a moment.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know."

"Are you warning me that she is not to be fallen in love with? You should have done that before; you had no business to let a girl like that come out here if there is any reason why she can't be had."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Of course I am."

"Well, then, I may tell you that as far as I know she is free—that may be taken as a matter of course at her age—but her father would never consent to her coming to live out here. Is the mischief done?"

"As far as I am concerned, it is. You must be an absolute idiot, Henrique, if you think a girl as pretty as that could be let loose here without the inevitable consequences."

"Not at all. Margarita has been here three years. But, Charley, I admit that if I had the choosing of her husband you would do as well as any one I know. Be off, and don't keep her too long."

Don Henrique was young himself, and devotedly attached to his own wife, whom he had won and married in spite of much opposition.

Irving rushed away to his charge.

"Would you like to take a little turn with me?" he said. "You must be stiff after your ride."

"Yes, very much."

"Come along, then; we will overtake the others easily enough before they get to the top. I know a short cut, and José and Tobalito can lead our mules." This was not what Don Henrique had intended exactly.

She was looking awfully pretty just then, Irving thought—a picture of bright, healthy girlhood and maidenly purity and sweetness. His speeches brought the ready blush to her cheeks more than once. Presently they turned a corner and saw the others slowly climbing the mountain-side just above them. He waited till they were out of sight, and then, unable to resist a temptation which was growing stronger every moment, put his arm round her suddenly and tried to draw her to him. She did not know what love was yet, he thought; he would teach her before he put the question he meant to put later on. She resisted him for a moment with all her strength, then something in the touch of his arm seemed to overpower her; she yielded, and their lips met. He looked for a moment into her shy dark eyes; there was wonder and a strange new happiness in their depths. Just then steps were heard coming down towards them. It was José. The señor had sent him back with the mules, he said. They mounted in silence, and spoke no word till they reached the mountain-top and saw the platform before them on which the house was built. It was a lovely spot, they all agreed, as they met. Irving lifted Nelly from her mule, an unnecessary attention, but it gave him the opportunity of touching her again. Henrique observed the manœuvre, and noted also that Nelly turned crimson once more.

Tobalito, who had ridden on, had made a great fire of walnut-wood in the huge hall, for at that altitude its warmth was agreeable in the house. They all sat round it and drank tea, declaring that the situation and surroundings of their quarters were perfect. After a rest on the camp beds upstairs the ladies came down and helped in the preparations for dinner. Nelly felt very happy, but avoided her lover as much as possible. He was in wild spirits. Hamilton and Margarita were quiet and grave as usual, but always interesting and agreeable members of a party, as Don Henrique used to say; Rosita was very much like her sister; they were singularly unselfish girls. One of them lies in the little cemetery now, not far from Hamilton's first wife.

After dinner they strolled out into the moonlight, but Nelly was too tired, she said, to stay, and she ran off upstairs in spite of a reproachful glance from Irving.

Her room was built out from the rest of the house, and there being nothing beneath it, she could see the moonlight on the grass below through an ill-fitting trap-door in the floor. She lingered long at the window thinking over the strange new experience that had come to her. Presently, when she thought every one had retired to rest, she heard voices apparently close to her. Two people were evidently just under the trap-door, not aware that the floor of her room was above their heads.

"I brought you here to tell you that, as you have been untrue to me, I wish you to consider yourself free," some one was saying in cold, measured tones. "It is unnecessary for me to explain how I became possessed of the information, but as I saw what I saw with my own eyes, there can be no doubt of the fact."

"I haven't the faintest idea what you mean," the reply came in tones as cold as his own. "However, as you wish to be free, rest assured that I shall raise no objection; your motive for wishing it is obvious." It was Margarita who was speaking.

"Pray mention it." This in Hamilton's deep, grave voice.

"Our little friend, Nelly; your attention to her has been obvious to all the world. No one can blame you; I like her immensely myself, and I should have respected you still had you given the right motive for the wish you have expressed."

"You must be mad to talk to me in that way. Can you deny that——"

But whatever he might have been going to say she never knew,

for she broke hastily away from him in the direction of the front of the house. Nelly felt cold all over at the confidence which had been forced upon her; she lay on her little white bed, thinking over the strange, eventful day which was just over till sleep nearly overcame her. Then she heard deep sobs at the other side of the planks which separated the next room from hers; it was probably poor Margarita, who had made a very great mistake. "Give him back to me; oh, God, give him back to me!" the girl was praying in half-stifled tones.

When Nelly woke next morning the sun was shining brightly through her window, and the sounds in the house seemed to indicate that it was time to get up. When she came down, she found them all assembled round the breakfast-table with one exception. Irving gave her a look over his coffee cup which embarrassed her not a little.

"Margarita is lazy this morning," said Henrique. "José, mind you keep the coffee hot."

"She was apparently fast asleep when I came down," remarked her sister. "I thought it a pity to disturb her."

"I will go off to the mines to-day," said their host, "and you two fellows can look after the girls. I shall be back to lunch."

Rosita proposed to Nelly that they should make some special dainties, which their men friends would be sure to appreciate; Margarita would be ashamed when she came down and found how industrious they had been. Irving asked to be allowed to help.

"You must go first," replied Rosita, "and have a smoke with Mr. Hamilton. By the time you have finished we shall have cleared away and then we shall be prepared to adopt your suggestion."

The two men went outside and strolled up and down in silence. Presently Irving said:

"I say, old fellow, there is something I should awfully like to tell you."

"What on earth is it?"

"Well, it is a delicate subject, but if you will promise not to be savage at my alluding to it——"

"Explain yourself, pray."

"Of course, we all believe you are engaged to——"

"Shut up, please."

"No, Hamilton; I must go on. There is a certain matter

which you ought to know. Carleton particularly begged me to tell you ; he didn't dare, he said."

"Damn Carleton ! I know perfectly well what you mean, and I decline to hear a word on the subject."

"Look here, Hamilton, you and I are old friends. Let me speak. You are under a delusion."

"There was no delusion in the little scene I saw the night before last ; that is doubtless what you mean. Well, perhaps I may as well tell you all about it. I think I should like you to know the truth. Two nights ago, when we dined at Henrique's, I went out into the garden to find her. She was just in front of me, and by the fountain Carleton was standing. I could not see their faces, as it was too dark, but I knew who the figures were. I was wishing he would take himself off, when I saw her go up to him, glance round to make sure all was right, touch his arm, and then allow him to take hold of her and kiss her in a fashion that made me long to knock him down, for, of course, you know who I am speaking of. I was close enough to them to hear a word or two she uttered, and that was quite enough for me. I suppose I moved, though the lemon-tree hid me from their sight, and she rushed quickly back into the house. We were engaged, but, of course, now I have set her free."

"Did you tell her why?"

"Of course I did not go into those detestable details ; she knew well enough."

"What were the words you heard her say to him?"

"Don't be a fool !"

"But, my dear fellow, the whole proof of the story I am going to tell you rests on those very words."

"Indeed ! The words were, 'Dick, my darling !' Now shut up, Irving ; I don't want to hear any of the fellow's excuses."

"If you do not listen, I will relate the whole story to Henrique and make him tell you."

"Go on, then ; but it is useless, you know."

"Now hear Carleton's account. He felt that touch on his arm, and was intensely astonished ; he would only have been too glad to win the girl himself—that we all know—therefore, it is not surprising that he yielded to the temptation to kiss her, as he owns he did. But, no sooner had he done so, than the words, 'Jack, my darling !'—I believe your name is Jack—met

his ear ; she had taken him for you. To this hour she believes it was you who kissed her ; it was pitch dark, you are both about the same height, and both have moustaches—an important item. Also, she probably expected you. Now, Carleton is most anxious you should know this, because, though he would, as I said, have liked to win her, he naturally no longer desires to do so. He is ready to give you his word of honour that this is the true account of the matter."

Hamilton listened in silence ; then he turned to his friend :

"You are absolutely sure of your facts, Charley? Remember what this means to me."

"Of course I am. Now go and make your peace. She must think you have gone out of your mind." As they turned towards the house the two girls met them with troubled looks. "We cannot find my sister anywhere," said Rosita.

"Nonsense," replied Hamilton. "Why, you said you left her in her room an hour ago."

"I called through the door to ask if she was ready and thought I heard a very sleepy answer. But her little dog is in there alone and it may have been him I heard. I did not go in."

They searched the house and surroundings ; an hour went by, then two. The men began to get really anxious. "If she has fallen into the hands of some of those brutes of peasants or the bands they are in league with, God only knows what may have happened to her!" Hamilton exclaimed to his friend, unable longer to refrain from speaking of the awful fear in his mind.

"She is a plucky girl," said the other. "They would not dare to do her any real harm, you know. If they have got hold of her, they will know it is to their interest to keep her safe till they get their ransom." But though he desired to comfort his friend he felt very uncomfortable himself. She had probably got up early and gone for a walk, they supposed ; there was no place for her to fall over and injure herself anywhere near, and it was most improbable that she would have wandered far unless she had been taken by force. No doubt she had had a sleepless night through her quarrel with her lover, for Hamilton had mentioned the fact that there had been something of the kind the night before.

They continued their fruitless search. Henrique did not return to lunch as he had intended to do, but this astonished no one, as business might easily have detained him, and Rosita,

foreseeing this, had given some provender to Tobalito, who accompanied him, for his use.

About four o'clock they heard a shout and the tramp of feet ; a burden was being carried. It was poor Margarita they were bringing home. Henrique, who had been communicated with, had at once returned, and passing on his way a disused well had turned aside to see if there might be any trace of the girl there ; it was a place where ferns grew in great abundance, and to his astonishment he had actually found her lying there. She was alive but evidently injured, and only moaned when spoken to. He went upstairs with the two girls, having considerable surgical knowledge, and reported when he came down again that she had sprained her ankle very severely. As far as he could judge from a very cursory examination, this might be the extent of the injury ; but from her semi-unconscious state, he feared her spine was hurt also. Hamilton was nearly distracted ; how she got where she was found there was nothing to show ; her dress was badly torn. The English doctor from L—— could not possibly arrive before the next evening, but it was arranged that one of the men and one of the two girls should take it in turn to watch through the night. Henrique and Rosita were to be in charge until midnight and then Nelly and Hamilton were to take their places. Henrique knew this would be a perfectly safe arrangement, and Irving felt he had no right to put in a claim under the circumstances.

No change had come over the patient when the second set of watchers took their place at the bedside. After they had sat there about half-an-hour, the girl's eyes slowly opened and she fixed them on Hamilton.

"Jack," she said in a low whisper, but he caught it, and Nelly instantly rose and went into the next room. He knelt down by the pillow.

"My darling, I know now that it was all a mistake," he said in broken tones. "Say you forgive me ; you are too ill to hear all about it now, but only get well and you shall see that I will make you amends."

She raised her hand feebly and laid it on his.

"Where are you hurt, my darling ; can you tell me ?" he went on. Her face was so white that there was a cold fear at his heart. "We know your ankle was sprained badly, but that is

all." The sound of his voice appeared to give her strength, and though the words came slowly, life seemed to be reviving within her as she answered him :

"I couldn't sleep, you know, after what you said to me, and I got up very early and went for a walk before any of you were awake ; I was so unhappy I scarcely knew what I was doing. I went down to the well and there I heard Spanish voices. I climbed up into the big tree which overhangs it so that they should not see me ; I heard them say they should come up to the house one night and see if anything was to be got, if they could poison the dog. Then I fell down from my perch and I expect I fainted. I think my head got a knock, I don't know. Dear Jack, I do love you, you know." He threw one arm over her and kissed her very gently, looking down at her with wet eyes.

"I didn't mean that about Nelly," she went on. "I ought not to have said it."

He saw that her memory was coming back, and that for the present, at least, his hopes might revive.

"Will you try and sleep now for my sake ?" he said. "I think that would do you a world of good."

"Yes," she answered, smiling a little, and then to his infinite satisfaction she turned with a sigh of deep content and slept without stirring till morning broke.

"She will do now," Henrique said as he looked in about six o'clock and found her lying in Nelly's arms and being fed with a teaspoon.

"A nice fright you have given us, young lady. Don't let it occur again."

When the doctor arrived he pronounced the patient to be on the way to recovery. There had been a slight shock to the system, necessitating rest for a few days ; and he also reported that Doña Carolina and the baby would arrive on the following day. This delighted her husband ; indeed that very summer his dream was realized, and now the whole of the English community of L—— go to find health and relaxation in that invigorating air as soon as the heat sets in.

When Irving heard that Margarita was out of danger he sent a peremptory note to Nelly requesting an interview. She still kept out of his way, however, and he did not get an opportunity of seeing her alone for several days. One evening he caught her off her guard and promptly revenged himself.

"I insist on your hearing what I have to say," he remarked in an injured tone as soon as the others were out of earshot. "I cannot write to your father till I have spoken to you, of course."

Nelly tried to look very much astonished.

"I did not know you knew him," she replied.

"Neither do I, as you are perfectly well aware. But I hope to make his acquaintance next autumn, when I intend to take a holiday. Nelly, dear, don't be nasty. I know you love me."

This sort of thing was outrageous in a man who had known her but two short months; when he ventured to throw his arm round her, however, and insisted on keeping it there, resistance seemed useless, and she whispered an answer which satisfied him. Her father gave his consent eventually; Hamilton and Margarita were married at the same time at the Legation in Madrid. Rosita was thrown from her horse in the autumn of the following year and lies among the flowers by the side of Hamilton's first wife.

SPAIN.

The Little City of Peel.

NEAR as the Isle of Man is to England, very few English people know much about it. It is true that every summer Douglas is visited by thousands of trippers. But Douglas is not the Isle of Man. It has become an ordinary third-class watering-place and a delight of the "week-end" tripper, and although nothing can destroy the natural beauty of its situation on the shores of a fine bay, it has become hopelessly vulgarised, and its individuality is gone for ever. The cheap tripper is no doubt often a most estimable individual in private life, his cheery good temper is above all praise, and the embarrassing heartiness with which he offers to share his pocket-warm eatables with any casual fellow traveller shows an admirable kindness of heart and expansiveness of character; but wherever the tripper in his thousands has descended upon any water-place, his

Effacing fingers

Have swept the lines where beauty lingers,

and taking from the place all that was quaint and characteristic have made it like himself—vulgar, noisy and somewhat rowdy. Douglas is a veritable trippers' Paradise for, in addition to a pier and a parade and all the ordinary amusements in which his soul

delights, it possesses several music halls which have beautiful gardens (where, all the year round, the fuchsia grows luxuriantly in the open air), and a fine headland to the south of the town on which a perpetual fair is carried on, and round which a beautiful marine drive is in course of construction. If he can tear himself away from the many and noisy delights of Douglas, the tripper may go round the island in a steamer and thus get a good general idea of the appearance of the coast, or he may drive in a carriage to the chief places of interest. The sea trip, given a fine day and a boat that is not overcrowded, is most enjoyable; but not much real knowledge of the island can be obtained from it, while to the other method of touring there are two somewhat serious objections. In the first place, the drivers of public conveyances prefer—for reasons which are probably not entirely disinterested—to devote an unfair proportion of time to the Glens, which are places of considerable natural beauty which have been “improved” by the public entertainer. It may be very satisfactory to the proprietor of a Glen to be able to announce that the little bit of scenery which he has been good enough to take under his protection is visited by thousands daily, and that he provides for the amusement of those visitors who have paid sixpence at his turnstile for admission, lawn tennis, boats, swings, trout fishing (!), &c., free; but such announcements indicate the Glens as places to be avoided by those who wish to know what the Isle of Man is really like. And, in the second place, a succession of brief flying visits to places of real interest leaves on the mind but a confused impression, which is apt to become distorted by the circumstances attending the visit. A comfortable or uncomfortable seat, pleasant or unpleasant travelling companions, a digestible or indigestible luncheon, have at least as much to do with the impression which places thus hastily visited leave on the mind as the characteristics of the places themselves, and the places are ever afterwards remembered in connection with these incidents in some such a way as the American lady was able to recall the fact that she had visited Rome: “Rome—Rome—oh, yes, that was the place where we bought those very bad stockings.”

Of course every one knows that the Isle of Man has a Parliament of its own which is called the House of Keys, that it has a copper coinage of its own which has on the reverse a shield with

the three legs on it which form the arms of the island, and that its cats have no tails. But the things which every one knows are seldom facts, and not one of these interesting pieces of general information is accurately true.

Cats without tails are certainly more common in the Isle of Man than elsewhere, but even in the Isle of Man it is only a minority of the cats that are tailless. Manx pence and halfpence may still be in circulation, but during a stay of nearly three weeks in the island, I did not see even a solitary specimen. The House of Keys is not the name of the Manx Parliament, but only of the Lower House, which in point of fact possesses very little power.

The Manx constitution is a very curious one, and the shadowy form of Home Rule which the island enjoys, while it is powerless for mischief, certainly has the effect of producing a great respect for the law among the people. The supreme ruler of the island, under the Crown, by whom he is nominated, is the Governor, who possesses something which very nearly approaches absolute power. It is true that there is a Parliament, or Tynwald as it is called, the Lower House of which, or House of Keys, is elected by popular suffrage (women having votes) for seven years; but as the Upper House, or Council, which consists entirely of office-holders nominated either directly or indirectly by the Crown, forms an irresponsible and irremovable Cabinet, and sits with closed doors, the House of Keys has very little power except for obstruction. Nor is its power of obstruction unlimited, for the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament is felt by the Tynwald to be a reality, and as all the important bills which are introduced into the Tynwald are for the most part based upon English Acts of Parliament, factious opposition would be an extremely dangerous game to play. The House of Keys has no power of initiation, but may only debate the bills which are referred to it by the Council; it cannot dissolve and is therefore unable to appeal to the people in the event of a conflict with the Upper House. The Isle of Man has indeed a faint shadow of representation in the Imperial Parliament. In the House of Commons it has no representative, but the Bishop of Sodor and Man has by courtesy a seat, but no vote, in the House of Lords. The Tynwald has the power of taxation, but a lump sum of £10,000 a year, which is supposed to represent the interest of the sum for which the island was purchased from the Derby family, is paid to the

Imperial Exchequer, and there is a Civil List of £11,000 a year over which the Tynwald has no control. The finances of the island appear to be admirably managed, for from a total population not larger than that of a fourth-rate English town, large funds have been raised for the construction of piers, harbours and other public works, and the main roads are very well kept. There is quite a respectable "National Debt," amounting to about a quarter of a million. There is no general poor law. In most of the parishes of the island the destitute poor are relieved out of a fund provided by private subscription supplemented in some of the parishes by local endowments. In some places, however, this admirable system has proved insufficient. The Tynwald Court has passed a permissive poor law, which has already been adopted by two of the towns and will probably soon become universal in its operation.

A little railway, ten miles long, connects Douglas with the Cathedral City of Peel. North of this line, with the exception of the aristocratic watering place of Ramsey on the east coast, the country is very thinly populated. A few miles from Peel there is a junction at St. John's, which is connected by a second railway, fifteen miles long, with Ramsey. Between these two lines is the mountainous region of the island. Ten of the mountains—most of which are in this region—are over 1,500 feet high, Snaefell the highest, being over 2,000 feet.

Castletown, the ancient capital, is on the east coast, about nine miles south of Douglas. It has about it an air of decayed respectability, and looks a dull and uninteresting place enough. In the centre of the town there is a little castle which appears to be in almost as good a state of repair as when it was first built and possesses a clock which was given by Queen Elizabeth, and is said still to keep "tolerable" time. Near to Castletown is King William's College, a well endowed and useful educational establishment. Further to the south, on the narrowest part of the island, are two picturesque little fishing towns—a mile and a half apart—Port St. Mary on the east, and Port Erin on the west. Between these two towns there is a bold headland, known by the name of Spanish Head. Here, according to tradition, some of the ships of the Spanish Armada were dashed to pieces. To the extreme south of the island is a yet smaller island—the Calf of Man. The Calf of Man is inhabited, and its proprietor is so en-

amoured of solitude that by advertisement in the newspapers he solemnly warns all and sundry against landing uninvited on his treeless and desolate domain.

It is curious to notice that in the little Isle of Man there is the same tendency of the population to concentrate itself in towns and to desert the country places which is noticeable in larger countries. Although the population of the whole island is increasing, this increase is due entirely to the growth of the towns. In all the country districts the population is diminishing.

In the remote and sparsely populated country districts to which the tourists and trippers rarely penetrate, except for brief flying visits, strange old beliefs, superstitions and customs still linger. Manx folk-lore—although it bears a general resemblance to the folk-lore of other Celtic nations—has its own peculiar characteristics. A very strong belief in witchcraft is still to be found in some parts. Unaccountable diseases appearing in cattle are attributed to the malign influence of a witch or wizard. For the purpose both of arresting the spread of the disease, and also of discovering the evil being who caused it, it is still believed that one of the infected animals must be burnt. In 1834 a living calf was thus offered as a burnt sacrifice in the parish of St. German. The ashes of the wretched victim were collected and applied to the rest of the herd—history does not record with what result. In 1843 there was a similar occurrence at Union Mills, and in 1853 at Maughold. There was an *oural losht* (or burnt offering) in the parish of Jurby in 1880, and it is believed that there have been several similar cases since. In one recent case a young horse—which it was supposed had been killed by witchcraft—was burnt in order that the witch might be induced to pass by, for when any bewitched animal is burnt it is believed that the first person who passes by will be the witch or wizard by whose spells it was afflicted.

However, it is not always necessary to proceed to such unpleasant extremities, for there are fairy doctors or charmers, who are able not only to counteract the spells of the witches, but also to use charms to bring luck to the fishermen, and for other beneficent purposes.

The Isle of Man is haunted by fairies, hobgoblins, phantom oxen of vast size, and phantom dogs. If the bravest of men sees one of these supernatural animals he is immediately smitten with unspeakable horror. Peel Castle was for a long time haunted by

a phantom dog, which appeared in the form of a large black spaniel with shaggy hair, and was known as the Moddy Doo. A drunken soldier ventured alone one night into the passage where he knew he would meet this exceedingly disagreeable creature. It was impossible to discover any of the details of the interview, for the foolhardy soldier was smitten dumb with terror, and died in strong convulsions three days after seeing the dog. The Moddy Doo, however, would seem to have been satisfied with the mischief which it had done, for it was never seen again.

Among a population consisting largely of fishermen, it is not surprising that there should be many old customs and superstitions connected with fish and fishing. A considerate Manxman will not turn a herring at table, as this would be tantamount to overturning the boat into which the fish was drawn from the sea. When one side of the herring is eaten the bone is removed, so that it may be possible to eat the other side without the necessity of turning it. The herring is king of the sea, having been elected long ago by the other fish to fill this high office. At this election all the fish were anxious to appear to the best advantage, and the vain and envious fluke spent so long a time in putting on his red spots, that he arrived too late. When he was informed of the result, he curled his mouth with scorn, and exclaimed, "A simple fish like a herring King of the Sea!" The truth of this story is attested by the fact that the mouth of the fluke has been on one side ever since.

There are several old proverbial sayings which indicate the importance of fishing to the prosperity of the island, such as, "No herring, no wedding," "It is better to be waiting on the top of the wave than on the church-yard stile." "Life to man, and death to fish," was a regular toast at public dinners. The Deemsters (or Judges) in their oath, swear to execute the laws of the island "as indifferently as the herring's backbone doth lie in the midst of the fish." Bishop Wilson inserted a special clause in the Litany in recognition of the importance of the harvest of the sea, "That it may please Thee to give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, *and to restore and continue to us the blessings of the seas*, so as in due time we may enjoy them."

In curious contrast to the mediæval superstitions which are to be found in the island, it has a truly astonishing number of newspapers. Considering the smallness of the population it is

difficult to believe that they can all pay. Probably they do not, but they nevertheless continue somehow to exist. They are amusing reading to a casual visitor, but can scarcely be conducive to domestic tranquillity, as they are as full of petty scandal as a society journal. If the names freely mentioned in them are little known in the greater world, they are not on that account any the less important to their respective owners, for no man is small to himself. And what queer-looking names they are!—Kermodes and Cawtes, and Clucases, and Cubbinses, and Kaighens, and Kennaughs, and Kneales, and Quayles, and Kinrades, and Clagues, and Creers—and many other such like combinations of letters, beginning for the most part with K or C, or Q. Two of these papers—the *Manx Sun* and the *Isle of Man Times*—quarrel in a style which can only be fitly paralleled by that of the rival editors at Eatanswill. The following paragraph, which was published in the *Manx Sun* last year, is too good to be lost:

“It is well to be sure of one’s facts. A northern contemporary says the Lieutenant-Governor has missed a cheap advertisement for the island, in reference to the Manx wedding present to the Duke and Duchess of York. The paper adds, ‘So far as we have been able to discover, it has not received mention in a single English newspaper.’ The Manx wedding present *has been* mentioned in all the London morning and evening newspapers, in most of them *twice*, including the *London Times*. It has also appeared in all the leading provincial, Scotch and Irish papers. Is this not a ‘cheap advertisement’? If not, perhaps the fact might gain greater publicity through our northern contemporary.”

Any one who wishes to get behind the noise of Douglas and to know what the Isle of Man is really like could not do better than stay for a week or two in the little cathedral city of Peel. Being in the centre of the western coast and close to the two lines of railway it is a very convenient place from which to explore all parts of the island. Peel is just sophisticated enough to have two good hotels and a sufficient supply of comfortable lodging houses for the accommodation of its not very numerous visitors, and not sophisticated enough to be provided with a band, nigger minstrels, or any of those other side shows which are to be found in more fashionable watering places. It is proud of its claim to be a city, being smaller than many a Lancashire village, and unlike any other city in the world. Its narrow

streets twist and curl themselves about in the strangest and most incomprehensible fashion. Under the older houses are huge cavernous cellars, which in ancient days were used for the storage of smuggled goods. There is a tiny market-place, on one side of which stands a disused church, which it is impossible to call anything but ugly, but its ugliness is of an order which is neither obtrusive nor entirely unpicturesque. Above the city stands a good modern church which is said to be the finest church in the island. In itself it is a favourable specimen of a well-designed modern sea-side church, but is quite out of harmony with its surroundings.

The Manx people do not seem to be enamoured of church restoration. They let their old churches fall into ruins, and build new churches to supply their places. None of these old churches could ever have been beautiful, but as ruins they are not without a certain charm.

The new church at Peel was erected to supply the place not only of the old deserted church, but also of the older ruined cathedral. On a little island off the south end of the sea front, and connected with the mainland by a causeway, stand the picturesque ruins of an old castle, within which are the ruins of the ancient Cathedral of St. German's. That the castle is haunted goes without saying, for the Isle of Man is so rich in folk-lore that every place is haunted, while for the possession of some localities several banshees, goblins and ghosts are rival claimants. Apart from its supernatural reputation there is much that is interesting about the castle. Of the cathedral it may be safely asserted that, with the possible exception of St. David's, it is the most romantically situated of the cathedrals belonging to the Church of England. According to legend, St. David placed his cathedral in the wild and remote spot which it occupies lest he should be distracted by the gaiety of Caerleon-upon-Usk, the ancient seat of the diocese, which is now known as St. David's. There is a strange fascination about that beautiful building and its surroundings, which it is impossible to describe, but which no one who has visited St. David's will ever forget. But the position of St. German's Cathedral is in some respects more remarkable than that of St. David's. Its eastern end pierces the castle wall and stands upon a rock so close to the water's edge that in winter or stormy weather the waves dash against it and rise higher than the top of its walls. In the days of its ancient glory,

the roaring of the wintry wind and the noise of the waves dashing against roof and walls must often have supplied a strange wild accompaniment to the voices of the choir uplifted in psalm and anthem. Up to nearly the middle of the present century, both these romantically placed cathedrals were deserted ruins. The cathedral of St. David's has been beautifully restored. The cathedral of St. German's remains a deserted ruin still, and strangely enough, although divine service is sometimes held within the ruins of the castle, the place selected for this purpose is not the cathedral, but the tilting ground.

Under the cathedral is a damp and dismal dungeon where many an unhappy captive endured a living death. Here, according to tradition, the unfortunate Eleanor Cobham, wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and uncle to Henry VI., was imprisoned for many weary years, until death released her from her miserable captivity. For one hour only every day was she permitted to leave her cell for exercise in a small inclosed yard. Once, indeed—after seven years of imprisonment—she regained her liberty for a few short hours. One of the soldiers who guarded her, either moved by pity or more probably won by bribes from his duty, woke her early one morning and led her out by a secret passage to a cave southward of Holme Town. From this cave she escaped to a hermit's cell, but was quickly discovered and brought back again, never again to leave her prison till released by death. For many years afterwards, at the stroke of twelve, her unquiet spirit was believed "to go up and down the stone staircase of one of those little houses on the walls." And here, by a turn of Fortune's wheel, Captain Edward Christian, who had been Lieutenant-Governor of the island, was imprisoned in 1628 for "sum words spoken concerning ye King." Here, too, for six years, from 1656 to 1662, several Quakers were confined for their non-conformity. When their imprisonment was over, they were banished from the island. During the stern rule of Bishop Wilson, the prison was used as a means of enforcing ecclesiastical discipline. It is a comfort to know that this damp and dismal hole will never again be used for any such purpose.

The inhabitants of Peel are honest, industrious, and it is to be hoped, successful fishermen. They are a fine and handsome race, somewhat shy, but always courteous and well-mannered. It is said that the Manx people are inclined to be quarrelsome

and litigious amongst themselves—a not unusual defect among the inhabitants of an isolated community, to whom small things must often appear large, but towards strangers their high-bred courtesy and kindness are as pleasing as they are remarkable. They are always ready to give information about their laws and customs, and if they appear a little disposed to boast of their law-abiding character, there would seem to be solid grounds for the credit which they take to themselves. That there are beggars and drunkards amongst the Manx people is highly probable, but during a stay of a fortnight at Peel, I never saw either drunkard or beggar. On remarking this fact to one of the fishermen, he told me that drunkenness and begging were against the law. The possibility that the law might be disobeyed never seemed to occur to him.

The Manx are a patriotic people, and their patriotism is shown not only in their complacent satisfaction in speaking of all things appertaining to their little island, but also in what they are ready to do for it. In its numerous endowed institutions the little city of Peel bears striking testimony to the love which its citizens have borne to it.

And the same affection which has led them to found institutions for the benefit of their birthplace induces them to observe their island customs, even when far from home. One of these customs is not only commendable in itself, but also has a strikingly pretty effect. Wherever a Manx fisherman may be, he always brings his boat into harbour on Saturday night, in order that he may spend Sunday on shore. It is a pretty sight to see the brown-sailed fishing boats coming into Peel Harbour by twos and threes on Saturday night, and leaving in a body on Monday morning. All through Sunday the small inner harbour is packed with boats; Sunday is a day of rest and quiet.

Those who do not need to take their pleasures noisily will find that they can obtain plenty of quiet amusements at Peel. The bathing is excellent. The beach is sandy and safe, and there are sheltered nooks close at hand which render the use of tents or bathing machines unnecessary. Those who take delight in sea-fishing may hire boats and tackle for a very moderate sum, and it is said that considerable numbers of fish are sometimes caught with the line. On a calm summer evening, to row out a little distance from the pier, and wait in an anchored boat for fish which will not bite, listening meanwhile to the gentle swish of the

water and the shouts and laughter of the fisher-lads, and watching the changing, waning light on sea and land, is enjoyment enough to the indolent, contemplative man. Indeed, such unsuccessful fishing has advantages over more successful sport, although it is probable that the keen sportsman would not sufficiently appreciate them. For the amateur fisherman enjoys it, and the fish must enjoy it also, for, although, they contrive to elude the hook they seldom fail to annex the bait, and should the fisherman catch nothing else, the keen sea air will at least give him an appetite, and if he is constrained to satisfy his cravings by buying fish instead of catching it, it is all the better for those who make their living from the harvest of the sea. The unsuccessful fisherman has therefore the satisfaction of feeling that he has spent a pleasant time upon the sea, has provided a light repast to hungry fish and has put money into the pockets of those, who, if they have been more successful than himself, have certainly done more to deserve success. Here, then, is the ideal spot, which brings pleasure without pain to all concerned in it. The philosophical fisherman enjoys it, the fish enjoy it, it brings profit to the owner of the boat and also to those to whom fishing is the serious business of their lives and not a mere pastime to while away an idle hour.

A day at Peel is not absolutely eventless. The coming and going of steamers punctuate the long lazy summer hours so that the holiday maker need not find that he has exchanged the weariness of dulness for the weariness of labour, like that unfortunate city clerk, who, after many years of constant work—in the days when bank holidays were unknown—was induced by his thoughtful employers to take a fortnight's holiday, and came back to the office on the second day, begging to be excused the rest of his holiday, for, having spent one whole day riding a donkey on Hampstead Heath, he had found the unaccustomed recreation infinitely more irksome and distasteful than his accustomed work at the desk. There is a steamer which plies daily between Belfast and Peel—arriving at Peel at the setting of the sun, and leaving again for Belfast in the morning. To the visitor both the departure and arrival of the boat are matters of somewhat languid interest. To the inhabitant—especially if he be a lodging-house keeper—the arrival of the steamer is most interesting and may be highly important, for every passenger who

lands at the Peel pier is a possible lodger, although it is darkly hinted that certain persons who are in the pay of the Douglas lodging-house keepers waylay the passengers and pour into their ears terrible tales of the impossibility of obtaining accommodation at Peel. A little after mid-day, the boat which daily makes the circuit of the island, passes by Peel and opposite to the castle rocks comes nearer to the land than at any other point in its course, so near, indeed, that the hoarse voice of the merry tripper on the boat shouting the mysterious cry, "Hi, Kelly," with which he salutes the scrambler over the rocks, may be distinctly heard. What these strange words mean I have not the slightest idea, but every genuine tripper who respects the traditions of the island appears to derive some strange delight in shouting them on all possible occasions. It is an innocent and simple pleasure, if somewhat incomprehensible to the philosophic mind.

There are many pleasant walks in the neighbourhood of Peel, and a hill to be climbed. This hill stands a little to the south of the town and is known by the name of the Horse Shoe Hill. From its summit, the whole of the western coast, from the Calf of Man in the south, to the point of Ayre in the north, may be seen, while inland there is a fine view of the mountains and valleys in the southern part of the island. The Isle of Man has been the scene of many desperate battles, and every foot of the country which is visible from the Horse Shoe Hill is full of historical interest. The island was probably invaded by the Romans, and certainly by Danes, Norwegians, Welsh and Irish. It was held now by one and now by another of these different nations. The legendary Norwegian King Orry was the founder of a dynasty and the builder of the castle of Castletown. The part which the island played in the Revolutionary wars is well-known to every reader of "Peveril of the Peak." It was a place of refuge for political refugees, of banishment for political exiles, of imprisonment for political captives. The echoes of the fierce battles which were fought on its fertile soil were often lost in the seas which wash its shores. They were for the most part of only local importance, but the struggles of the peoples who strove for mastery in it are so rich in romantic events and more romantic legends, that when the history of the island comes to be written by competent hands it will excel in interest that of many far larger countries.

A Mystery of the Sea.

CHAPTER I.

SOME forty years ago Eastbourne was little more than a fishing hamlet.

At the time I speak of the railroad had not invaded this quiet nook. The road leading to what is now such a fashionable sea-side resort led over the marshes from Pevensey, where the train set down passengers bound for Eastbourne.

Eastbourne was by no means up to date at that time, and differed in most things from fashionable Hastings.

No dainty damsels were to be met by the sea-shore in the newest mode of marine attire, nor did you meet matrons not slim, but comely, coquettishly dressed, as though still bent on conquest and a little mild flirtation to while away the time until papa came down by the husband's train on Saturday.

All such folly was looked down on, if not despised, by the demure young ladies and stout austere matrons who resorted to Eastbourne to brace up their already strong constitutions.

Hats were seldom, if ever, seen on grown-up female heads. Matron and maid alike wore large bonnets, with blue silk uglies projecting over their faces like an awning at the back of a bathing machine.

The first party I met on my way to Eastbourne comprised a matron with a following of well grown up daughters, some six in all, mounted on donkeys. They all wore uglies, and their petticoats being rather full and short, a good bit of leg was visible, clad in white cotton hose, their large fat feet encased in stout leather slippers, tied on with broad black sandals.

It was about as odd a cavalcade as I ever met, and the hallooing and shouting of the donkey-drivers, as they pulled the animals' tails and belaboured their backs to make them go, was certainly primitive if not savage looking.

We were told at the hotel Eastbourne was quite full, but a bill in one of the windows of the three houses facing west at the end of the Grand Parade gave us some hope of lodgment.

The sea wall did not extend beyond this short parade; the rest of the road, as far as the Wish Tower, lay over a wide expanse of sea shingle, by no means pleasant to walk over.

Beyond the Wish Tower was the open downs, where immense flocks of sheep browsed in uninterrupted solitude.

A beaten path lay along the cliff, fenced off from the downs for the most part by a rude stone hedge to keep the sheep from falling over the steep cliffs.

There was no carriage way along the cliff in those days ; if you wanted to reach Beachy Head by the cliff you had to walk.

We elected to take this walk on the first day of our arrival, and on our return journey chanced on an old shepherd leaning on his crook by the low stone hedge.

We stopped to speak with him, and found by his replies that he was quite a century behind the age.

He had tended the sheep on his native downs, man and boy, for more than sixty years. Had been married some forty years an' more, and had brought up a family of nine on ten shillings a week.

Did he ever have any holidays ? Yes, twice a year, Christmas Day and sheep fair day, after the sheep-shearing.

And what about Sundays ? did he ever go to church ? Well, as to Sundays, he minded his sheep same as other days ; hadn't been to church but once since he was married. " My going to church that there once happened this way," he said, leaning over the stone fence and becoming all at once communicative.

" My old woman, she says to me, ' The squire he be going to give away some prime beef at Christmas, and he's doing it through the parson, so it's them as goes to church will get the biggest share.' "

" Well, the Sunday afore Christmas, I puts on my best smock-frock and clean clothes, and after sending my oldest boy to look after the sheep, made my way to church.

" I felt rather strange like when I came to the church porch, as I hadn't been to church of a Sunday afore within memory.

" However, I says to myself, ' you do as other folks does and you can't go far wrong.' Well, I stood at the door and watched them a bit ; then I took courage, made for the nearest empty seat, sat down and clapped my hat afore my eyes, looked into it a few minutes as I'd seen the others do ; but when I was going to rest that hat on my knees to get out my pocket-handkerchief, there was Sol looking up at me with the queerest look I ever seed in a dog's eyes afore.

" ' Softly, Sol,' says I, ' you get under the seat,' and I took hold on 'im to push 'im under, but he didn't see it, and after a little

tussle he jumps up alongside me and looked about him just like a Christian ; he only wanted a hat to say his prayers in to behave like the best on 'em.

"In less than a minute up comes Tom Crab, the beadle, very red in the face. 'How dare ye bring yer dog in here! Don't 'ee know as how animals arn't allowed into church? Come, now, out with you ; here's the squire and the parson coming up to the west door ; they'll be here in another minute. Get out, I say!'

"So I gets up all in a fluster and hastened out at the south door, Sol following close at my heels.

"We han't a-been to church since, sir, Sol nor I ; 'tis no place for the likes of we.

"Why do I call that dog Sol, sir ? Well, his name is Solomon by rights, and a wise un he is too ; knows the ways of sheep better than I do, though he arn't ten year old till Martinmas.

"They is poor, silly things is sheep, sir ; I'd never get them into the fold at lambing time if it wasn't for Sol. When the lambs gets mixed up the old ewes go bleating hilter skilter, often after a dozen on 'em, knocking 'em over like ninepins ; that's Sol's time : he knows every mother's son on 'em, and brings 'em up to their dams in less than no time."

When we bade him good evening he touched his forelock and looked wistfully at his empty pipe.

My friend understood this mute appeal instantly. He happened to have a pouch full of prime cavendish in his pocket ; to transfer it to the hands of the old shepherd did not take a moment.

We looked back when we had gone about twenty paces. The broad grin of satisfaction on the old man's weather-beaten visage did one good to see.

The evening was closing in when I reached my lodgings at the east end of the Grand Parade ; I had taken care to secure them in the earlier part of the day.

It might have been the parting from my my friends, at the Pevensey station, that cast a gloom over my spirits ; anyhow, it was in no very cheerful frame of mind that I entered the dingy apartments of my sea-side lodgings.

I had been hypped and out of sorts for some little time. Hastings had not proved bracing enough, besides I wanted repose and perfect quiet. The bouyant spirits, cheerful talk and joyous laughter of my young friends had jarred on my over-

wrought nerves until I could endure it no longer ; therefore I decided to beat a retreat and retire to Eastbourne all by myself.

It was a rash step, that I more than half repented of already as I sat alone in the gloaming, listening to the monotonous grate, grate of the shingle as it was borne back by each receding wave. No other sound broke the stillness ; not a creature was to be seen : what a relief the sound of a cheerful voice, breaking in on this unnatural silence, would have proved to me.

I was completely tired out by my long day's unwonted exertions, and must have fallen asleep by the open window : although it did not appear to me that I had closed my eyes, before a bony hand was laid heavily on my shoulder, and starting up I found myself face to face with the most unpleasant-looking female it had ever been my lot to behold.

She was apparently about fifty years of age, thin and wiry to a degree, with a complexion the hue of dried parchment.

Her features were sharp, her pale blue eyes bright as gleaming steel and just as hard and cold.

"It's ten o'clock, miss," she said in a harsh voice. "I've brought in your chamber candle ; we turn off the gas always afore eleven."

I felt relieved when she retired and closed the door behind her. If I had seen this woman when I looked over the apartments, nothing would have induced me to reside for one night under her roof.

As it was, I had taken them for a month, and money was of some consideration to me just then.

Anyhow, I must stay there that night ; perhaps the woman might be kind enough at heart spite of her unprepossessing appearance.

Fearing she might reappear before turning off the gas, I took my chamber candle and proceeded up stairs to my bed-room, on the first floor, at the back of the house.

The bed-room was of fair size, but the great old-fashioned four-poster almost blocked up the centre, and it was draped in some sort of dark woollen material, that looked almost black in the dim light, giving the lumbering machine the appearance of a huge hearse.

Such beds are seldom seen, even in lodging houses, at the present day, and from every other house they have long since been banished to the limbo of forgotten things.

Before I extinguished my bed-room candle, I took the precaution to look under the bed, to make sure that no one lay concealed beneath it.

I found, however, that the framework of this ark-like structure reached within some two feet of the floor, so that no full-grown person could possibly creep under the bed.

Reassured by this, I locked my bed-room door, put out my light and crept into bed with fear and trembling. That old four-poster was rather awe-inspiring in the darkness.

Spite of this, however, I soon fell asleep, and slept on for some hours undisturbed even by a dream, when I awoke suddenly, in a terrible fright, to find the bed rocking under me like a cradle.

With a fearful cry I sprang out of bed and sank into a capacious arm-chair near the window.

Then I held my breath to listen. A low hollow sound, like the beat on a muffled drum, fell distinctly on my ear, making my flesh creep with horror.

It was pitchy dark, and to my dismay it flashed across my mind that I had forgotten to provide myself with matches.

I groped my way to the bell-pull, and tugged at it with all my might ; then I waited, hoping every moment to hear footsteps approaching.

I waited in vain. The house remained perfectly quiet. It was useless to ring again. The landlady had told me, when she gave me my chamber candlestick, that no bells were answered after the gas was put out.

When I realized that no help could be expected from that ogre-like woman, I began to try to regain my lost courage, and face the worst.

No living thing, I reasoned, could possibly have been concealed in the room when I locked the door and retired to bed. What, then, was there to fear? I had never done harm to any creature alive or dead. Why should I be troubled with phantoms, even if the room were haunted?

In broad daylight I would have scorned to own to a belief in the supernatural, and have laughed to scorn the idea of my attributing some unaccountable sounds in the dead of night to ghostly visitants.

Even now I tried to reason myself into the belief that I had awakened out of sleep in a sort of nightmare. The muffled sounds I heard could not be quite reasoned away, still I should be just as safe from evil influence in bed, as sitting out, the night through, in that old arm-chair in the cold ; still it was not with-

out reluctance that I crept once more into bed. Alas! All my boasted scepticism melted away in that lonesome chamber; a strange awe came over my spirit, as ever and anon the bed swayed gently to and fro and the curtains rustled as though drawn aside by ghostly fingers.

I clasped my hands together and prayed far more earnestly than I had ever done in hours of real peril, when imminent death appeared to stare me in the face.

A horrible dread took possession of my mind, when I remembered the hard, cruel expression limned on the features of my landlady: she looked a woman equal to any deed of fell intent.

Perhaps some one had been done ruthlessly to death in that fearsome bed, and their wild expiring cry for mercy had rung through that dreary room in the stilly midnight hour: a cry that might still be going up to heaven for vengeance!

Did some unquiet spirit haunt this unblessed spot, like the ghost in "Hamlet," waiting to reveal a terrible crime till questioned?

In a voice rendered husky with terror I adjured the phantom in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to speak, or depart and leave me in peace.

To my dying day I shall never forget the awful thrill that chilled my heart's blood when three distinct raps broke the solemn stillness of that fearsome night.

I sat up in bed and vainly tried to pursue my questioning. I could not utter a sound. My tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. I was all but paralyzed with terror.

Then the rapping became quicker and louder, as though my ghostly visitant were impatient of delay.

Hist! what was that? Muffled footfalls, surely! Yes, and coming nearer! yet nearer!—close up to my pillow! The curtains rustled—I could endure no more; with a stifled cry I fell back insensible.

I must have lain some hours in a sort of trance, overcome by the awesomeness of the situation in which I found myself.

Out of this trance, however, I was at length rudely awakened by feeling myself lifted bodily up in bed, and nearly flung out on the floor.

So violent was this additional shock to my already overwrought nerves that, had not the early daylight penetrated the gloom, I should have gone crazy from sheer fright.

Quite dazed, and trembling in every limb, I opened my eyes and peered through the half-drawn curtains.

All in a moment some dark object crouching near the door arrested my attention.

I sat up and leant over the side of the bed. As I looked the dark, shapeless-looking thing moved, and reared itself upright. It was certainly nothing human.

At sight of it all my self-control gave way; I fell back in a violent fit of hysterics, laughing and crying in a breath like one demented.

People who know me call me a strong woman. I suppose I must be, as I soon pulled myself together, and took a good look at the cause of my recent night's terror.

A pair of beseeching brown eyes looked timidly at me, as though deprecating my anger.

Poor dumb creature! My relief at finding the cause of my past night's terrors a living substantial object disarmed all idea of retribution. I instantly unlocked and opened the door to give this unwelcome intruder exit, and very soon I heard my *oufe*, of the dark hours, going slowly down the stairs with that muffled tread that had so terrified me in the dark watches of the night.

CHAPTER II.

THE sunlight flooded the room when some one knocked at my door to say it was past nine o'clock and breakfast was waiting.

I rose at once, and was not long in making my toilet; but before I left my room I made a careful examination of that uncanny-looking four-poster.

There was not any palliasse on this ancient bedstead, but a sacking instead, laced to the framework with strong cord. On this sacking a feather bed had been laid—not a bad arrangement with regard to comfort, save that the sacking could be easily made to sway to and fro, giving one the sensation of being tossed in a blanket.

The space underneath the bed appeared a sort of repository for lumber and dust. An old worn leather portmanteau, with "H. R." painted on it in white letters, particularly attracted my attention, as behind this my four-footed gnome must have lain perdu under the bed until I fell asleep, and on getting up to stretch himself had caused the oscillation which, together with the dull, drumming sound, had so terrified me.

It was easy enough to laugh at my recent terrors now that the cause was made manifest. Nevertheless, I would not pass through such another night's experience for a king's ransom.

As I sat at breakfast I espied the disturber of my repose stretched full length on the doorstep basking in the morning sunshine.

The landlady coming into the room at that moment, I inquired to whom the dog belonged, and mentioned the fright he had given me during the past night.

"So the brute has been up to his tricks again, has he?" she snapped, eyeing the poor animal viciously. "It was only last week that he frightened a lady into a fit of the jaundice, and lost me a good ten-pound note at the very least. I'd give any one a shilling to poison or drown that dog willingly."

"But how did it get under my bed?" I asked with pardonable curiosity.

"Dear knows, that's more than I can tell! I looked under your bed the last thing at night, and shut the door, knowing his tricks; but keep that dog out of that room at night is more than I can do, though how he gets in there is a mystery to me, unless he creeps down the chimney."

"But there must be some reason for this," I remarked, looking straight at her.

"Well, yes, there is, and it happened this way. Rather more than a month ago a gentleman came here to lodge, and brought that dog with him. I don't take in dogs as a rule, but the gentleman was civil spoken and paid handsomely, so I stretched a point to oblige him; though I didn't know till afterwards that the brute slept under the bed every night.

"I must say the gentleman didn't give much trouble. He was out all day after breakfast, and, provided there was a good bone for the dog, he didn't mind what he had for dinner himself. He wasn't here a full week, however, when he went out one morning as usual, followed by his dog, and I've never laid eyes on the gentleman since. That's four weeks ago yesterday. He left nothing behind him but an old portmanteau, which, seeing he didn't come back for, I pushed under the bed. The sailors hereabouts think he's drowned, because he used to take a boat and go out by himself a long way from the shore to bathe, and the last time he went out it was a bit rough; but it's my opinion he only

did that to throw dust in the boatmen's eyes, and took his opportunity at last to get away in some outward-bound ship. Well, all I wish is that he had taken his horrid dog along with him!"

A sad foreboding fear made my voice tremble as I at length inquired the name of the missing man.

"Well, miss, strange as it may seem, I cannot remember. He told me his name, of course, but I'm bad at remembering names. I only wish I did know, 'cause I'd soon advertise it in the papers, to say if he didn't come to fetch away his belongings they'd be sold to pay expenses. That might cause some of his friends to make inquiries. I daresay he's got some one belonging to him, though I've always thought it strange that no letters were ever delivered to this house for him."

I had listened to the woman's tale with a sort of dreamy fascination. Could it be that fate, or chance, had brought me to that dreary sea-side lodging, to hear that my fondest hopes had vanished like a dream?

It was not quite a year ago since first we met; yet Harry Kerswell was the king among men to me; the only man I ever loved, or could love.

I was only a governess in his father's family, yet he was manly and courageous enough to ask his parents' consent to our union.

Sir William had always been kind and courteous to me since I entered his family, and although he naturally looked for his only son to marry some high-born maiden, he would have given a reluctant consent, had not Lady Kerswell and his eldest daughter vehemently opposed, what they were pleased to term, such a *mésalliance*.

It is only women who treat with scorn every female worker in the great human hive, no matter however refined and highly educated that worker may be.

I had done my duty honourably in that state of life in which it had pleased God to call me, yet nothing could exceed the envy, hatred and all uncharitableness displayed towards me by the ladies of Sir William Kerswell's family. They scorned me as though unworthy to touch the hem of their greatness, and tried their best to humble me in the dust.

After that, I had a decided aversion to enter the family, but Harry would not give me up.

"I will wait a year," said he, "to allow my parents time to think it over. If at the end of that time they refuse to give their

consent, I mean to marry without it, and we will go out together to the far west, where we shall be free from old-world conventionalism, and enjoy a free, unfettered existence."

To this I gave a rather unwilling assent; I did not see why we should banish ourselves from civilized society because his family did not choose to consider the wife he had chosen their social equal.

Not that I would not have gone with him gladly to the remotest part of the habitable globe, but I foresaw that once the newness of such an existence in the far west wore off, he would pine for his old way of life, and become discontented, if not absolutely miserable.

At length I ventured to write and tell him how distasteful the idea of self-banishment had become to me, more on his account than my own; therefore we had better give up all thoughts of making our future home in the far west.

That was two months ago, and I had not heard from Harry since; hence my distaste to the society of my gay, cheerful young relatives, and the desire to be alone, which had brought me to Eastbourne.

I sat almost spell-bound for some time after my landlady had left the room; a dread foreboding that the missing lodger was Harry Kerswell had taken possession of my mind.

At length, with a strong effort, I put away my haunting fears. "My nerves are unstrung," I said impatiently, "and every shadow appears to take the form of evil portent."

The better to shake off this unwonted depression of spirits, I decided on taking a long walk over the downs, and after dinner to return to Hastings: another night in that dreary lodging would prove beyond endurance. The bare idea of it sent a shudder through my frame.

When I started for my walk, the great curly black dog still lay stretched out in the sun before the door.

Newfoundland dogs are all pretty much alike. At Clumber Park they kept a dog very like this one. It was Harry's dog, and the master and his canine friend were seldom seen apart. Alas! I felt certain it was his dog when the animal began to follow me along the Parade. Arrived at the end, the dog turned down towards the sea, and after a moment's hesitation I followed his track.

It was nearly high tide, so it did not take long to reach the water's edge, where I sat down with the dog crouched close beside me.

"Poor old Yeo, come again to look for yer master, eh?" said an old weather-beaten sailor, as he patted the dog's head.

"Yeo!" my heart sank within me, as I heard that old familiar sound. "Yeo, Yeo!" I repeated in painful excitement.

The dog sprang up, placed his forepaws on my shoulders, and began to lick my face.

Overcome, I burst into tears.

"Belike as you knowed the young gentleman, miss?" said the old sailor. "I've been expecting all along as some one would be here to make inquiries after him."

"What was the gentleman's name?" I asked, as soon as I recovered sufficient composure to question him.

"Well, miss, I believe it wor Kerswell; leaseways, he told me so."

"And you say the gentleman went out to sea in a boat, all by himself? Please tell me all you know about this sad affair," I cried eagerly.

The old sailor sat down on the side of a boat and looked seaward for the space of what, in my impatience, I thought the best part of an hour, apparently to collect his thoughts; then he cleared his throat with a long and rather loud resounding *ahem!* before commencing a prolix relation of all he knew concerning this tragic event.

"I pushed the boat out from the beach for him that morning as usual," he said, at length. "It was rather rough in-shore, and the wind came in sudden squalls from the south-west; not that there was any danger to one who could handle a boat, and the gentleman could do that, like one to the manner born; still I did venture to ask him if he hadn't better take a hand in the boat with him, to look after it whilst he dived over for his deep-sea bath. But he never would take a creature with him, no, not even his dog; so he only laughed in his pleasant way, and said, 'Oh, I shall be all right, Larry. If the boat drifts away, I'll swim ashore.'"

"I watched him as he pulled out to sea, with a slow, powerful stroke, that sent the boat through the water like an arrow from a bow, until the little craft appeared like a mere speck on the ocean. Then I went about my work and forgot all about it, till dinner time, when seeing he hadn't returned, I got rather anxious."

"When a couple of hours more went by, without any sight of the missing boat returning towards shore, me and my mates went out in a sailing craft to look for it. But although we cruised along the coast till midnight, we saw no sign either of man or boat; and to this day the fate of that poor young gentleman remains a Mystery of the Sea."